

Pets in the Classroom Lesson Plans

3.1 Biological Sciences: Expedition Amazon

Big Ideas: Our class pets come from a very different environment than we do. Let's learn the differences/similarities and the proper care they need.

Questions: How are we similar and different to our class fish? What essentials do our fish need? Where do they come from?

Corydoras live in aquariums across the world, but the species of catfish is indigenous to the Amazon River, specifically in the Southeast Brazil area. They live in schools with dozens of other cories (20+ in the wild and at least three in our tanks) and scavenge the river floor for insects, tiny crustaceans and plants to eat. They use their whisker-like barbels on the sides of their mouths to hunt for food in the murky river water.

Their name, corydora, comes from the Greek word meaning "helmet skin" for the protective spine and mildly poisonous barbels on their dorsal and pectoral fins. These fish love to hide around plants, rocks, driftwood and other places at the bottom of the Amazon and its tributaries.

And just like humans, these fish use sounds to communicate, although their words sound a lot different than ours. They use clicking noises to communicate with their groups of friends.

Cories are very peaceful fish and show very little aggression in the wild or in the aquarium. They're friendly personalities and easy-to-care-for routine make them great family pets.

Transformation: Our classroom will become the Amazon Rainforest and River area. Children will go fishing in our classroom river, learn about the different animals that live in the region and be able to "hide" just like our class pet, the corydora.

Activity	Lesson	Objective	Evaluation
Preparing to journey to the Amazon (9.1V)	The children will create binoculars, safari vest out of paper towel tubes and paper bags to "gear up" for our Amazonian journey.	Fine motor skill development, facilitate imagination, curiosity and	Children will be able to complete the activity with wearable

		develop art skills	vest
Journey to the Amazon (7.1, 1.3, 1.5)	Circle time reading "Rainforest Wonders" by Erin Ranson; children will gather on an "ATV" circle time carpet and take a "ride" through the Amazon via the pages of our book.	Discuss where the Amazon is in on a different continent than ours; learn about the different animals who inhabit the rainforest and river	Children will answer questions while reading the book; act out like some of the animals
Can you guess what a Corydora is? (9.1V)	Now that we've read our book and learned about the jungle, who lives in the water? What kind of animal do you think the cory is? Children will draw their first guess on paper. Children will be given clues from facts about corydoras.	Fine motor skills, reasoning ability	Children will complete artwork from their imagination
Go Fish...for Cories! (AL3PKC, 2.1 PKA2)	Once the children have guessed what a cory is, they'll witness the big reveal. Children will see what an actual cory is in our classroom tank. And will don their vests and fishing nets to catch a few from our very own Amazon River in the classroom. Cories live in groups of three or more, so the children will use their counting skills to easily find the fish from a selection of others. Groups will split up into stations to fish, put together Amazon-themed puzzles, check out science books focused on Amazon rainforest.	Practice counting and matching skills, along with identification	Children will use their counting skills to identify the cories in our river from other Amazon fish.

<p>Where would you hide if you were a cory?</p>	<p>We learned that cories like to hide in dark, shady, thick places under the water. Children will write a narrative about where they would like to hide if they were a fish.</p>	<p>Get children thinking about places to hide; ask them questions about why they think cories hide, what feelings make them hide, e.g. feeling shy, scared, etc.</p>	<p>Drawing, imagination, thinking</p>
<p>Chat like a cory (9.1M)</p>	<p>Cories will click when they eat, click when they find a friend, click when they're looking for a friend. We'll sing a cory song by making beats by clicking our tongues. Children can also listen to see if our resident cories will talk back.</p>	<p>Teach children about musical patterns and rhythm</p>	<p>Children will be able to make a "musical" clicking pattern</p>
<p>Take Home Lesson; Parent chat</p>	<p>We see cories and other Amazonian fish at almost every pet store. We've added a note to the newsletter to encourage discussion/Q&A between parent and child about the Amazon fish and cories we've learned about.</p>	<p>Encourage discussions at home and further learning to reinforce the lessons, develop verbal/speech skills and to apply classroom lessons to everyday life.</p>	<p>A quiz will be shared in the parent newsletter; parents and children will review the questions about cories and submit their entries to a drawing to win a prize (book about the Amazon).</p>

