

Lesson Plan Ideas

When the Nest Fell

Based on a True Animal Rescue Story

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Lesson Plan/Curriculum Guide

Subject and Grade Level	Learning and Performance Standards	Disciplinary Core Ideas	Learning Activities
Science 3 rd /4 th grade	<p>New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards</p> <p>3-LS2-1. Construct an argument that some animals form groups that help members survive.</p> <p>3-LS4-3. Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.</p> <p>Disciplinary Core Ideas LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience ☐ When the environment changes in ways that affect a place's physical characteristics, temperature, or availability of resources, some organisms survive and reproduce, others move to new locations, yet others move into the transformed environment, and some die. (secondary to 3-LS4-4) LS2.D: Social Interactions and Group Behavior * (NYSEd) Being part of a group helps some animals obtain food, defend themselves, and survive. Groups may serve different functions and vary dramatically in size. (Note: Moved from K–2) (3-LS2-1) LS4.C: Adaptation * For any particular environment, some kinds of organisms survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all. (3-LS4-3) LS4.D: Biodiversity and Humans</p>	<p>LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience * When the environment changes in ways that affect a place's physical characteristics, temperature, or availability of resources, some organisms survive and reproduce, others move to new locations, yet others move into the transformed environment, and some die. (secondary to 3-LS4-4) LS2.D: Social Interactions and Group Behavior * (NYSEd) Being part of a group helps some animals obtain food, defend themselves, and survive. Groups may serve different functions and vary dramatically in size. (Note: Moved from K–</p>	<p>Squirrel Drey Worksheet:</p> <p>Read and answer questions about the nests that Eastern Gray Squirrels build in trees, and how squirrels interact socially. <i>(see worksheet below)</i></p> <p>Activity-Habitats:</p> <p>Eastern Gray Squirrels live in a habitat very close to humans. How do human actions like cutting down trees or replacing parks and green spaces with buildings and shopping malls affect squirrels and other local wildlife?</p> <p>What local animals have you seen or heard today? Where do they live? <i>(see worksheet below)</i></p>



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	<p>* Populations live in a variety of habitats, and change in those</p>	<p>2) (3-LS2-1) LS4.C: Adaptation * For any particular environment, some kinds of organisms survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all. (3-LS4-3) LS4.D: Biodiversity and Humans * Populations live in a variety of habitats, and change in those habitats affects the organisms living there. (3-LS4-4)</p>	
<p>English Language Arts (ELA)</p> <p>K/1st/ 2nd/3rd/4th grades</p>	<p>Kindergarten Reading Standards (Literary and Informational Text) KR Key Ideas and Details KR1: Develop and answer questions about a text. (RI&RL) KR2: Retell stories or share key details from a text. (RI&RL) KR3: Identify characters, settings, major events in a story, or pieces of information in a text. (RI&RL) Craft and Structure KR4: Identify specific words that express feelings and senses. (RI&RL) KR5: Identify literary and informational texts. (RI&RL) KR6: Name the author and illustrator and define the role of each in presenting the ideas in a text. (RI&RL) Integration of Knowledge and Ideas KR7: Describe the relationship between illustrations and the text. (RI&RL) KR8: Identify specific information to support ideas in a text. (RI&RL) KR9: Make connections between self, text, and the world. (RI&RL)</p> <p>1st Grade Reading Standards (Literary and Informational Text) 1R Key Ideas and Details 1R1: Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text. (RI&RL) 1R2: Identify a main topic or central idea in a text and retell important details. (RI&RL) 1R3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, or pieces of information in a text. (RI&RL) Craft and Structure 1R4: Identify specific words that express feelings and senses. (RI&RL)</p>	<p>Squirrel Drey Worksheet:</p> <p>Read and answer questions about the nests that Eastern Gray Squirrels build in trees, and how squirrels interact socially.</p> <p>Creative Writing Activity:</p> <p>What would you do if you saw a nest of baby squirrels fall to the ground? How would you go about getting them help?</p> <p>Creative Writing Activity:</p> <p>Talking About The Baby Squirrels: Look at the picture from page 7 of <u>When the Nest Fell</u>. What are these squirrels feeling as they fall from their nest?</p>	



<p>1R5: Identify a variety of genres and explain major differences between literary texts and informational texts. (RI&RL)</p> <p>1R6: Describe how illustrations and details support the point of view or purpose of the text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>1R7: Use illustrations and details in literary and informational texts to discuss story elements and/or topics. (RI&RL)</p> <p>1R8: Identify specific information an author or illustrator gives that supports ideas in a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>1R9: Make connections between self and text (texts and other people/world). (RI&RL)</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</p> <p>1W1: Write an opinion on a topic or personal experience; give two or more reasons to support that opinion.</p> <p>1W2: Write an informative/explanatory text to introduce a topic, supplying some facts to develop points, and provide some sense of closure.</p> <p>1W3: Write narratives which recount real or imagined experiences or events or a short sequence of events.</p> <p>1W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme or personal experience (e.g., poem, dramatization, artwork, or other).</p> <p>W5: Begins in Grade 4</p> <p>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</p> <p>1W6: Develop questions and participate in shared research and explorations to answer questions and to build knowledge.</p> <p>1W7: Recall and represent relevant information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question in a variety of ways.</p> <p>2nd Grade Reading Standards (Literary and Informational Text) 2R</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p> <p>2R1: Develop and answer questions to demonstrate an understanding of key ideas and details in a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R2: Identify a main topic or central idea and retell key details in a text; summarize portions of a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R3: In literary texts, describe how characters respond to major events and challenges. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, describe the connections between ideas, concepts, or a series of events. (RI)</p> <p>Craft and Structure</p> <p>2R4: Explain how words and phrases in a text suggest feelings and appeal to the senses. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R5: Describe the overall structure of a text, including describing how</p>	<p>Why do you think that the workman in the tree didn't notice them fall?</p> <p>Vocabulary:</p> <p>Look at the first word in the glossary. Write a sentence that includes that word. Repeat that for each of the other words in the glossary as well. (see worksheet below)</p>
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	<p>the beginning introduces the text and the ending concludes the text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R6: Identify examples of how illustrations, text features, and details support the point of view or purpose of the text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>2R7: Demonstrate understanding of story elements and/or topics by applying information gained from illustrations or text features. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R8: Explain how specific points the author or illustrator makes in a text are supported by relevant reasons. (RI&RL)</p> <p>2R9: Make connections between self and text (texts and other people/world). (RI&RL)</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</p> <p>2W1: Write an opinion about a topic or personal experience, using clear reasons and relevant evidence.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: Students in 2nd grade should understand the difference between opinions and arguments and begin to learn how to write arguments with claims and supporting reasons. For example, a student's opinion could be "I like cupcakes." A student's claim could be "Cupcakes are the best snack." A student's argument could be "Cupcakes are the best snack because..." with supporting reasons and evidence.</p> <p>2W2: Write informative/explanatory texts that introduce a topic, use facts and other information to develop points, use content-specific language, and provide a concluding statement or section.</p> <p>2W3: Write narratives which recount real or imagined experiences or a short sequence of events, including details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.</p> <p>2W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).</p> <p>3rd Grade Reading Standards (Literary and Informational Text) 3R</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p> <p>3R1: Develop and answer questions to locate relevant and specific details in a text to support an answer or inference. (RI&RL)</p> <p>3R2: Determine a theme or central idea and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize portions of a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>3R3: In literary texts, describe character traits, motivations, or feelings, drawing on specific details from the text. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, describe the relationship among a series of events, ideas, concepts, or steps in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. (RI)</p> <p>Craft and Structure</p>	
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	<p>3R4: Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, and academic and content-specific words. (RI&RL)</p> <p>3R5: In literary texts, identify parts of stories, dramas, and poems using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, identify and use text features to build comprehension. (RI)</p> <p>3R6: Discuss how the reader's point of view or perspective may differ from that of the author, narrator or characters in a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>3R7: Explain how specific illustrations or text features contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text (e.g., create mood, emphasize character or setting, or determine where, when, why, and how key events occur). (RI&RL)</p> <p>3R8: Explain how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence. (RI&RL)</p> <p>3R9: Recognize genres and make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Phonics and Word Recognition</p> <p>3RF3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <p>3RF3a: Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and suffixes.</p> <p>3RF3b: Decode multi-syllabic words.</p> <p>3RF3c: Identify, know the meanings of, and decode words with suffixes.</p> <p>3RF3d: Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</p> <p>3W1: Write an argument to support claim(s), using clear reasons and relevant evidence.</p> <p>3W1a: Introduce a claim, supported by details, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.</p> <p>3W1b: Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary.</p> <p>3W1c: Use linking words and phrases to connect ideas within categories of information.</p> <p>3W1d: Provide a concluding statement or section.</p> <p>3W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to explore a topic and convey ideas and information relevant to the subject.</p> <p>3W2a: Introduce a topic and organize related information together.</p> <p>3W2b: Develop a topic with facts, definitions, and details; include illustrations when useful for aiding comprehension.</p> <p>3W2c: Use precise language and content-specific vocabulary.</p> <p>3W2d: Use linking words and phrases to connect ideas within categories of information.</p>	
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	<p>GRADE 3</p> <p>3W2e: Provide a concluding statement or section.</p> <p>4th Grade Reading Standards (Literary and Informational Text) 4R</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p> <p>4R1: Locate and refer to relevant details and evidence when explaining what a text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences. (RI&RL)</p> <p>4R2: Determine a theme or central idea of text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize a text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>4R3: In literary texts, describe a character, setting, or event, drawing on specific details in the text. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts, including what happened and why, based on specific evidence from the text. (RI)</p> <p>Craft and Structure</p> <p>4R4: Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, academic, and content-specific words. (RI&RL)</p> <p>4R5: In literary texts, identify and analyze structural elements, using terms such as verse, rhythm, meter, characters, settings, dialogue, stage directions. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, identify the overall structure using terms such as sequence, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution. (RI)</p> <p>4R6: In literary texts, compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations. (RL)</p> <p>In informational texts, compare and contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event or topic. (RI)</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>4R7: Identify information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, illustrations), and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text. (RI&RL)</p> <p>4R8: Explain how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence. (RI&RL)</p> <p>4R9: Recognize genres and make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Phonics and Word Recognition</p> <p>4RF3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <p>4RF3a: Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.</p>	
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	<p>Fluency</p> <p>4RF4: Read grade-level text with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.</p> <p>4RF4a: Read grade-level text across genres orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.</p> <p>4RF4b: Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.</p> <p>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</p> <p>4L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>4L4a: Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p> <p>4L4b: Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).</p> <p>4L4c: Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses) to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.</p> <p>4L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>4L5a: Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors in context.</p> <p>4L5b: Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.</p> <p>4L5c: Demonstrate understanding of words by relating them to their antonyms and synonyms.</p>	
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References:

New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards (3-5), New York State Education Department, <https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/science>, accessed July 14, 2025

New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards, Grade P-12, Revised 2017, New York State Education Department, <https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/english-language-arts>, accessed July 14, 2025

Kirsten, Norton, When the Nest Fell, Sprouting Seed Press, 2025



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Squirrel Drey - Worksheet

Read the paragraphs below and answer questions about the nests that Eastern Gray Squirrels build in trees, and how squirrels interact socially.

If you see a ball of leaves up in a tree in New York, it's often not a bird's nest. Eastern Gray Squirrels live in the Eastern areas of the United States and Canada. They build their nests in trees using leaves, branches, moss, and pine needles. Dreys are easier to spot in the winter, when the leaves are gone. They are larger than birds' nests and easier to spot.

Squirrels usually build nests around twenty feet high, in a fork of tree branches. First, twigs are loosely woven together for the floor of the nest. Squirrels add damp leaves and moss on top of the twigs and on the sides to make the nest stronger. Squirrels then weave in more moss, twigs, leaves, bark, and dry grass. They line the nest with more leaves, bark, or dry grass so the nest is warm and cozy for the baby squirrels when they are born.

Squirrels don't hibernate in the winter. They leave their dreys in the winter briefly to gather food. Otherwise, they huddle together in their dreys for warmth during those cold winter days.

Baby squirrels normally start exploring the world outside their dreys when they are six weeks old. After their mother teaches them about climbing and gathering food for survival, the baby squirrels are old enough to leave the nest and venture out on their own at ten to twelve weeks old, and sometimes a little longer until their mother has a second litter of baby squirrels in late summer.



In June and July, the mother squirrel usually teaches her baby squirrels how to build a nest. Squirrels also build nests in the fall of prepare for winter. The young squirrels normally build their nests nearby their mom.

References:

How Do Squirrels Nest? Where, When, How, and Why Squirrel Drey Facts,
<https://rangerplanet.com/how-squirrels-nest-dreys-how-where-when-and-why-facts/>,
accessed July 14, 2025

Welber, Bobby, Ball Of Leaves Found In New York Trees Isn't A Bird's Nest, Hudson Valley Post,
Published: April 28, 2025, <https://hudsonvalleypost.com/ball-of-leaves-found-in-new-york-trees-isnt-a-birds-nest/>, accessed July 14, 2025

Questions:

1) The nest of an Eastern Gray Squirrels is called a:

- a) drey
- b) moss
- c) litter
- d) bark

2) Eastern Gray Squirrels usually build nests:

- a) ten feet high
- b) twenty feet high
- c) twenty-five feet high
- d) thirty feet high



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3) In the winter, the Eastern Gray Squirrels:

- a) hibernate
- b) head south
- c) huddle together for warmth
- d) dig underground tunnels

4) Baby squirrels normally don't venture into the outside world until they are:

- a) two weeks old
- b) four weeks old
- c) six weeks old
- d) twelve weeks old

5) The mother squirrels normally teach their baby squirrels how to build a nest in:

- a) April and May
- b) June and July
- c) August and September
- d) November and December



Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Activity-Habitats

Eastern Gray Squirrels live in a habitat very close to humans. How do human actions like cutting down trees or replacing parks and green spaces with buildings and shopping malls affect squirrels and other local wildlife?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

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Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Activity-Habitats

What local animals have you seen or heard today? Where do they live?

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Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Creative Writing Activity

In the book, **When the Nest Fell**, the nest of baby squirrels fell to the ground when the branch holding their nest was cut down. The kind lady who lived in the house by the tree put the baby squirrels in a box and called an animal rescuer for help.

What would you do if you saw a nest of baby squirrels fall to the ground?
Would you do things differently? How would you go about getting them help?

[illegible]

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Creative Writing Activity

(continued)

[illegible]

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Creative Writing Activity- Talking About The Baby Squirrels



Look at the picture above from page 7 of When the Nest Fell. What are these squirrels feeling as they fall from their nest?

Why do you think that the workman in the tree didn't notice them fall?



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Creative Writing Activity- Talking About The Baby Squirrels (continued)

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Vocabulary from the Glossary in When the Nest Fell

Look at the first word in the glossary. Write a sentence that includes that word. Repeat that for each of the other words in the glossary as well.

Achy - To be very sore and tired all over

Booming - A very loud and deep sound

Cicada - An insect that rubs its wings together to make a buzzing sound, usually heard in the summer

Dehydrated - To be very thirsty due to a loss of fluids in the body

Devastated - Very shocked and sad

Drey - A squirrel nest, found in the top of a tree and made with twigs

Ear plugs - These are used to block out noise. They plug the ears to keep noises out

Equipment - Tools needed to perform a task

The Injured Reserve - The name of Kirsten's wildlife rehab center

Interfere - To get involved with something you shouldn't

License - Formal, written permission from an organization permitting someone to do something that is not otherwise allowed

Lofty - Very tall and high up

Nature - The natural world, all the parts of the world that are not man made



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Nest - A home made of branches and leaves for squirrels or other animals

Nestled - To cuddle up

Nurse - To take care of or to drink milk

Opportunity - A chance

Orphaned - A baby or child who lost their parents

Professional - Someone who does a job that they received training for and have experience in

Reassure - To comfort and soothe someone to help their fears go away

Scamper - To run around playfully

Startled - To feel surprised, shocked, and sometimes scared

Tree rings - Circular rings that are shown when a tree is cut open to show a cross sectional view. Each ring is left when the tree grows each year. This is how we tell how old a tree is.

Tremble - To shake in fear

Whirr - A buzzing noise

Wildlife - Wild animals and plants - anything alive in nature that was not domesticated by humans

Wildlife rehabilitators - Volunteers who work to help sick, injured and orphaned wildlife



We hope that you like these lesson plans and find them useful.

We welcome your feedback and would love to hear from you!

Please let us know what you thought about the lessons by

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