mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson + Activity: “Is the Loch Ness Monster real?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

Hey, it's Danni! When I was a kid, I was fascinated by stories about the Loch Ness Monster. For years and years, people have told stories about a huge, mysterious underwater creature that lurks in Loch Ness in Scotland. Loch is a Scottish word for lake, so Loch Ness means Lake Ness. People claim to have spotted the Loch Ness monster poking her long neck out of the lake, but did they really see what they thought they saw? Someone named Leyla has a question about this mysterious monster. Let's give Leila a call now.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Danni!

- Hi, Leyla!

- I have a question for you. Is the Loch Ness Monster real?

- That’s a great question!

When I was a kid hearing about the Loch Ness Monster, that's what I wanted to know too: could this possibly be real? Actually, I've heard lots of stories like these. From the Scandinavian seas, we get tales of the Kraken, a sea monster with long tentacles who can crack ships in half. In Puerto Rico and other places, people tell stories of the chupacabra, a monster who eats farm animals at night. Around the Himalayan Mountains, there are stories of a huge furry monster on two legs called the Yeti or the Abominable Snowman, or many other names depending on who's

telling the story. These mysterious creatures people tell stories about are called cryptids. In these stories, cryptids are often monsters—scary animals that do scary things. And the stories almost always end with the same idea: no one knows if they really exist because no one has ever caught them in the wild. Have you heard stories about cryptids before? What have you heard?

VIDEO 2

It seems like every place in the world has some story of a scary animal lurking in the shadows nearby. Are these monsters real? In most cases, probably not. These creatures are just stories. But even though most cryptids are made up, real animals can be pretty bizarre and monstrous-looking too. Let's play a game. I'll describe an animal, and then you'll guess if this is a cryptid from stories or a real animal. Okay, animal number one. This creature is covered in wrinkly pink skin. It lurks under the ground, and it has two huge front teeth it can move separately like a pair of chopsticks. If you think this creature is a cryptid, give a thumbs up. If you think this creature is a real animal, give a thumbs down. Okay, animal number two. This sea creature looks like a giant floating head in the water. It has fins sticking out of its head like airplane wings. If you think this is a cryptid, thumbs up. If you think it's not, thumbs down. And finally, animal number three. This creature is shaped like an enormous blob. The blob could weigh as much as 4,000 pounds, and it has a mustache. If you think this is a cryptid, thumbs up. If not, thumbs down. And the answers are: they're all real animals. Not one of these animals is a cryptid. Let's take a closer look. This is a naked mole rat. They live in hot underground tunnels. Down in their dark and toasty home, they don't need fur or feathers to protect them from the sun or the cold. So they don't have much hair, just wrinkly pink skin. Down in the dirt, there aren't many soft leaves to eat, but there are lots of tough and chewy roots. Their sharp, chopstick-like

front teeth help them chomp on roots. This animal, the Mola Mola, lives in the ocean. In the water, it doesn't really need legs to walk or arms to climb. It just needs some way to move around the water. So it has fins that push it around and not a whole lot else. And animal number three, that's a walrus. While it does have some impressive features I didn't mention, like these powerful flippers and these huge tusks, a lot of its body is, well, kind of a blob. Walruses' bodies have a thick, heavy layer of blubber, which keeps them warm in their icy Arctic home. Without it, they'd freeze out here. If you'd never seen one of these animals before, the first time you saw one, you might think you were encountering a strange and terrifying monster. But these animals look and act the way they do because they live in a particular environment. Their features help the animal survive in the place where they live. Cryptids are usually made up, but they often share things in common with real animals that do live in similar environments. A huge furry white Yeti stomping around in the snow? That's not real. But big animals with thick white fur do exist in snowy places. Just ask this polar bear. Stories describe the Loch Ness Monster as a huge underwater creature with a long neck, sharp teeth, and flippers. That's just a story, but if you want to see a real underwater animal with a long, wiggly body and sharp teeth, just check out these eels. And if you want to see a huge animal with flippers in the water, take a look at this whale. So, in summary, cryptids like the Loch Ness Monster are mysterious animals people tell stories about. Most cryptids are made up or exaggerated, but there are plenty of almost-too-weird-to-believe animals out there. These animals may look weird, but their unusual features help them survive in their environment. It would be weird if they didn't look that way. That's all for this week's question. Thanks for asking, Leyla. We have something extra for this week's lesson. My friends and I here at Mystery Science have created a short drawing activity about cryptids. If you have time, check it out!

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION VIDEO

From real-life animals to made-up cryptids, they all have something in common. They can have some crazy features! And those crazy features serve a purpose: to help them survive and do different things. For example, the naked mole rat has big, strong teeth to help it chew through its food. And the yeti, a legendary cryptid, is said to have thick white fur that helps keep it warm and stay hidden in the snow. In today's activity, you're going to create your very own cryptid. You'll choose features from real animals and combine them into your own made-up cryptid. To help you choose what your cryptid looks like, you'll imagine how the features can help your cryptid to survive and do things. For example, your cryptid might have wings that help it fly high into the sky, or it might have fins that help it swim deep in the ocean. Or maybe it'll have both. It might have sharp claws to help it cut down things in its way, or hands that can hold onto things, or pinchers that can pinch and crush. After you choose your features, you'll bring your legend to life by drawing it. To help you get started thinking about what features your cryptid could have, try this. Imagine that a cryptid had sharp teeth, a shell, and tentacles. How do you think each of these parts could help the cryptid?

STEP 1

Get your supplies. Make sure you have the right worksheets. These are for kindergarteners and first graders, and this one is for older students.

STEP 2

This step is for kindergarteners and first graders. Older students, skip to the next step. Choose the body parts you want your cryptid to have. Circle a mouth you want, the eyes you want, what

arms and legs you want, and anything extra you want your cryptid to have. You can also make up your own ideas for your cryptid's body parts if you want.

STEP 3

Older students: Choose at least three features that you want your cryptid to have. You can choose from the options on the screen, or add your own based on the features of real-life animals. At the top of your worksheet, write the features you choose and how they will help your cryptid survive and do things.

STEP 4

Kindergartners and first graders, this step is for you. Older students, skip to the next step. It's time to draw your cryptid. We got it started for you. Add the parts you circled on your worksheet onto the body here to make a cryptid. For example, we chose this mouth and these eyes, so we drew a head like this. We chose these arms and tentacles for legs, so we drew those like this. We chose wings from the extras, and we added something we thought of: two big ears. If you chose similar things to us, you don't have to draw it like this. You can draw it however you want. Now it's your turn. Draw your cryptid on your worksheet.

STEP 5

Older students: it's time to bring your cryptid to life. Draw your cryptid in the box with the features you chose. For example, a cryptid with tentacles, a shell, and sharp teeth could look like this, or maybe this, or even this. Think about what your cryptid might do or where it might live to help you decide how you want it to look. Now it's your turn. Draw your cryptid on your worksheet.