



Essential Question: How can you decide which informational websites are right for you?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: Students explore the distinctions between the quality and appeal of a children's informational website. They use both types of criteria to rate and compare children's informational websites.

Using the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**, students visit two different websites about extreme animals and rate the sites according to their quality and appeal. Students conclude that they should look for high-quality sites that they enjoy using.

objectives

Students will:

- Explore the differences between quality and appeal as they evaluate children's informational websites
- Evaluate informational websites and compare their findings
- Understand that they need to consider both the quality and appeal of a site when choosing which informational websites are right for them

Materials and Preparation

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Materials

- A familiar children's book that has won a major award
- **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**

Preparation

- Copy the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**, two copies for every group of students
- Preview the websites listed in Teach 1 and Teach 2
- Set up the classroom computer to project the screen, and/or arrange for students to work in groups at several computers. If you don't have computer access or an Internet connection, print out the home pages of the sites listed in Teach 1 and Teach 2 to hand out to student groups

Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Research and Evaluation for Elementary Students Parent Tip Sheet**
- Send parents the **Wikipedia Parent Tip Sheet**

Key Vocabulary

- **Quality:** How good something is
- **Appeal:** How much you like something
- **Informational Website:** A site that primarily provides information on a subject



teaching plans

Introduce

Choose a book that has won a children's book award, such a Newbury Medal, Coretta Scott King Award, or National Book Award. Try to choose a book that most students will have read.

ASK *Do you like this book?* (Have students raise their hands to indicate whether they like the book a lot, don't like it, or feel neutral. For now, do not ask them to explain their responses.)

ASK *Do you think it is a good book?* (Students should understand that the award means that people who know a lot about children's books believe it is of high quality.)

ASK *What makes it a good book?*

Sample responses:

- *It is well written.*
- *The characters/real people in the book are realistic.*
- *I could understand what the characters/people are thinking and feeling.*
- *The story is about something important.*
- *It made me think about new things.*
- *I learned something from it.*
- *I enjoyed reading it.*

ASK *Does the fact that it is a good book mean that everyone has to like it? What reasons might you have for not liking the book or feeling neutral about it, even though others have given it an award?*

Sample responses:

- *I am not interested in the subject.*
- *I couldn't relate to the characters/people in the book.*
- *It seems like it's for younger/older kids.*
- *The reading level is not right for me.*

INTRODUCE the Key Vocabulary words **quality** and **appeal**.

DISCUSS with students the idea that **quality** is evaluated by how good something is, which could mean how excellent, superior, and trustworthy it is. **Appeal** is evaluated by how much we like something.

Teach 1: Which Sites Are Right for You?

ARRANGE students into groups of three. (There are three response areas for students to complete on the handout.)

DISTRIBUTE the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**, one copy for each group.

TELL students you will be exploring the topic of "Extreme Animals." Visit the "Extreme Mammals" page on the website of the American Museum of Natural History: www.amnh.org/exhibitions/extrememammals.



If possible, project your computer screen at the front of the classroom so that you can explore the website with your class, or arrange students so they can explore the site on shared computers.

INTRODUCE the Key Vocabulary term **informational website**.

EXPLAIN to students that they will be exploring an **informational website** about extreme animals, and then answering some questions about the site. Some of the answers will be based on facts that reflect the **quality** of the website. These appear in the unshaded portions of the handout. Some answers will reflect the site's **appeal** for them, based on whether or not they like the features of the site.

If the answer to a question is yes, they should give it a “thumbs up” on their handouts. If the answer is no, they should give it a “thumbs down.”

COMPLETE the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout** as a class, following these steps.

1. Before you begin, have students click on some of the links to explore what the site has to offer (allow five minutes).
2. **READ** each of the “Quality” questions aloud and invite volunteers to respond. Have them support their answers with evidence from the website. Indications of a high-quality website include having credible experts, links to helpful websites about the topic, great images, and things to do to help understand the topic. High-quality sites might also show that they’ve won an award. After filling in their columns, groups can circle the answer that reflects the majority opinion of the class.
3. **READ** each of the “Appeal” questions aloud. Remind students that appeal is about what they like about the features of the site. Have students raise their hands to answer yes or no to each question. There should be some differences in student responses to these questions. After filling in their columns, groups can circle the answer that reflects the majority opinion of the class.
4. **DIRECT** students to the two questions at the end of the handout. Invite volunteers to respond, and discuss the responses as a class.

ASK *Would you return to this site to write a report about extreme animals? Why or why not?* (Students should explain, based on the information they have gathered, that the site would or would not be a good source of reliable information about extreme animals.)

ASK *Would you return to the site for fun? Why or why not?* (Students should understand that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to this question. Whether they would return to the website depends on their own personal likes and dislikes. Have students think beyond the topic of the site to the features of the site. For instance, even if students don’t like the topic, they might still find parts of the site appealing. Some students may be really interested in extreme animals, others may not like the activities on the site, while others may find that the reading level on the site is not right for them.)

5. **CONCLUDE** with these follow-up questions to enhance students’ understanding of the distinctions between a site’s **quality** and its **appeal**.

ASK *Do you think this is a good **informational website**?* (Students should understand that the website has a variety of quality features that will help them learn new information about extreme animals, so it qualifies as a good informational website.)



ASK *Do you like the website?* (Students should feel comfortable expressing why they do or do not like the website, and if they like it, how it appeals to them.)

Teach 2: Rating Informational Websites

DISTRIBUTE additional copies of the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**, one copy to each group. If your classroom has a limited number of computers, more than one group may share a computer, but each group should fill in its own handout.

ASSIGN each group one of the following websites about extreme animals:

Animal Planet: The Most Extreme

http://animal.discovery.com/fansites/mostextreme/episode/episode_o1.html

Extreme Animals

<http://www.extremeanimals.org>

CBBC Extreme Animals!

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/wild/extremeanimals>

25 World's Weirdest Animals

<http://divaboo.info>

ALLOW students 15 to 20 minutes to explore their sites and to answer the questions on their handouts. Each of the group members should fill in one column.

INVITE students to share their answers. Did they conclude that it is an informational website of good quality? Why or why not? How does it compare with the Natural History Museum's Extreme Mammals site? If two or more groups disagree in their evaluation of a particular site, encourage them to discuss their differences.

ENCOURAGE volunteers to share what they thought about the **appeal** of the site. Students should express a variety of responses to each site, and they should be able to explain the reasons for their likes and dislikes (beyond the topic itself).

DISCUSS with students why a particular **informational website** might or might not be the right site for them.

ASK *Would you return to any of these sites, either to write a report or just for fun?*

Guide students to understand that the very best **informational websites** for them score high on both **quality** and **appeal**. Groups can circle the answer that reflects the majority opinion of the class.

Wrap Up and Assess

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK *What is the difference between **quality** and **appeal**?* (Students should understand that quality reflects how good a site is, while appeal reflects their likes and dislikes of the features in the site.)



ASK *What are some things that make an informational website of high quality?* (Students should be able to respond with several of the following: a lot of factual information about a subject; realistic pictures; links to external sites with more information on the subject; activities that help you learn; content created by experts.)

ASK *What kinds of informational sites are the right ones for you to use?* (Students should aim to use high-quality sites that they also enjoy using.)



Extension Activity

Invite students – individually or in pairs – to write down on a piece of paper the name and URL of one of their favorite informational websites, reflecting a topic that interests them. Have the students rate the site using the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout**. Next, have students trade their papers and visit the sites they received, and then rate the sites. Students can compare their results with each other. Students can also compare their results to online reviews of the website. Check out parent and kid reviews on Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org).



Homework

Distribute additional copies of the **Which Sites Are Right for You? Student Handout** for students to take home. Encourage students to ask a family member to choose an informational website about a topic that interests them. After exploring the site together, each of them can fill in one column on the handout. Students can also compare their results to online reviews of the website. Check out parent and kid reviews on Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org).

Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

3. Research and Information Fluency

- b. locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media
- d. process data and report results

4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

- c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions

Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit resource that helps families and educators teach kids how to be safe and smart in today's 24/7 media world. Go to www.commonsensemedia.org for thousands of reviews and expert advice.



Which Sites Are Right for You?

Group Members

Class _____

Date _____

Directions

Look at the informational website you are rating. Answer each question with a “Yes” or “No.” Each group member should fill in one of the columns.

Name of site: _____

QUALITY	Student #1 _____	Student #2 _____	Student #3 _____
1. Does the site have a lot of facts?			
2. Does the site have links to other useful websites?			
3. Do the pictures on the website seem realistic?			
4. Are there different things you can do on the site to help you understand the topic?			
5. Was the site created by experts who know a lot about the topic?			



Which Sites Are Right for You?

APPEAL	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
1. Are you interested in the content of the site?			
2. Do you like exploring the different parts of the site?			
3. Do you enjoy looking at the pictures?			
4. Are there fun things to do on the site?			
5. Is the reading level on the site right for you?			
TOTAL "YES" and "No"	#1 _____	#2 _____	#3 _____

Would you return to the site to write a report about this topic?
Why or why not?

Would you return to the site for fun? Why or why not?
