



Sail the Surreal Seas: The Exquisite Sea Corpse

A joint learning project presented by The Pier Aquarium, Inc., and the Dalí Museum.

Goals:

Students will practice scientific observation, gain an understanding of how marine creatures adapt to their environments, and learn how to write a natural history.

Students will work collaboratively in groups and learn the Surrealist art game, “The Exquisite Corpse.”

Description:

After students review or define concepts of adaptation and environment, they learn what a natural history is and how it is written. Then they work in groups to create fanciful sea creatures via the Surrealist parlor game, “The Exquisite Corpse.” When the creatures are finished, students continue working in groups to create natural histories, using scientific observation to name their creatures, identify individual characteristics, and speculate how these characteristics may have allowed their creatures to adapt to particular environments. Lastly, each group presents its “results” to the class.

Materials:

Legal-sized paper; pens, pencils, or magic markers; pictures or preserved examples of marine creatures.

Vocabulary:

Environment, Adaptation, Surrealism, The Exquisite Corpse, Natural History, Scientific Observation, Collaboration.

What to Do:

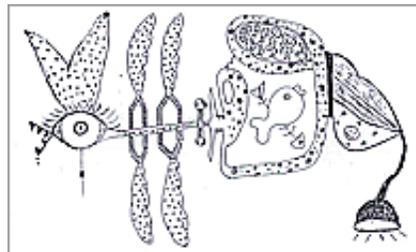
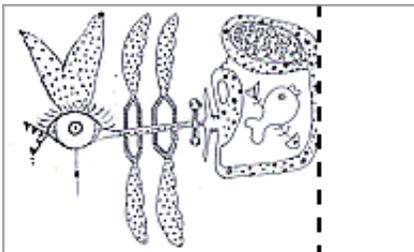
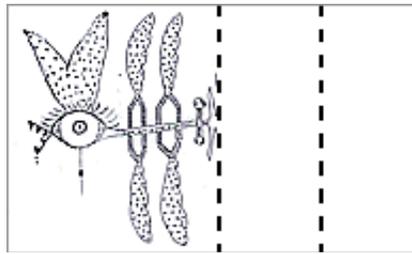
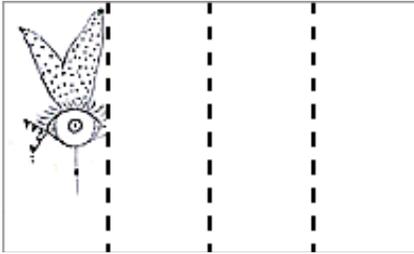
1. Review, introduce or define “adaptation” and “environment” and the relationship between the two, using pictures or specimens as examples.
2. Introduce the idea of a “natural history” (purpose, creation of, questions to ask, etc.).
3. Review Dalí and Surrealism if desired; teach “The Exquisite Sea Corpse.”
4. Divide into groups of four, play “The Exquisite Sea Corpse,” and have each group collaboratively write a natural history of one creature.
5. Present natural histories to class (with Exquisite Sea Corpse illustrations).

Field Trip Info: 727.895.7437 (The Pier Aquarium, Inc.); 727.823.3767 (Dalí Museum)

Sunshine State Standards (Grades 3-5): SC.F.1.2, SC.G.1.2, SC.G.2.2, SC.H.1.2, SC.H.3.2; LA.B.1.2, LA.B.2.2, LA.C.1.2, LA.C.2.2, LA.C.3.2; VA.A.1.2, VA.B.1.2. **(Grades 6-8):** SC.F.1.3, SC.F.2.3, SC.G.1.3, SC.G.2.3, SC.H.1.3; LA.A.1.3, LA.B.1.3, LA.B.2.3, LA.C.1.3, LA.C.3.3, LA.D.2.3; VA.A.1.3, VA.B.1.3.

HOW TO PLAY “THE EXQUISITE SEA CORPSE”

Materials: Legal-size paper; pens, pencils, or magic markers



Description: The Surrealists developed “The Exquisite Corpse” as an art game that everyone could play. (It was first a language game in which players made surreal sentences, not images; according to legend, the first game’s first three words were “The,” “Exquisite,” and “Corpse.”) In “The Exquisite Corpse,” four people work together to make a surreal creature—one that is surprising, shocking, and constructed by chance combinations. It was originally played with a vertical piece of paper and with a humanoid creature in mind, but the Dalí Museum and the Pier Aquarium, Inc., have adapted it to fulfill the goals of “Sail the Surreal Seas: The Exquisite Sea Corpse.”

Hint: “The Exquisite Corpse” is usually played with four players and one piece of paper. However, for best results and full participation in the classroom, it is a good idea for all students to be drawing all the time. We therefore suggest that each group simultaneously create four “exquisite sea creatures.”

Hint: Make sure to hide your drawings from the other players until the end! And be creative; it’s okay to have three heads, legs, or biologically-surreal body parts!

Step 1: Divide into groups of four. Give each group four pieces of legal-sized paper.

Step 2: Each student folds paper width-wise in half, then half again (see diagram).

Step 3: (See diagram) Player #1 draws a creature's head on the first panel, extending a few lines onto the next section so that Player #2 has a few lines to use as a starting point. When Player #1 is finished drawing, he or she folds the section over so that it remains hidden from all subsequent players. Player #1 passes paper to Player #2, who draws the second part of the creature's body. Player #2 finishes, hides the image, then passes to Player #3. Player #3 draws, hides the images, and passes to Player #4 who completes the fourth and last panel. (If four creatures are being created at once, as each player passes to the left, he or she will also receive the next panel from the right; in this way, every player gets to complete a head, two body segments, and a tail.)

HOW TO WRITE A NATURAL HISTORY

Natural history is the study of organisms and their origins, evolution, interrelationships, and description. Natural histories are a common component of identification and field guides. While they vary in format, natural histories commonly include the following information.

Common Name (Easily pronounced name used by the public)

Scientific Name (Usually Latin-based, conforms to the taxonomic classification system)

Physical Description (physical attributes including coloration, markings, features, body shape, size, etc.)

Geographical Range (where an organism is found, e.g. oceans, countries, continents, climactic regions)

Habitat (description of an organism's environment, e.g. seagrass beds, mangroves, coral reefs, etc.)

Biology (Includes both the organism's breeding and feeding habits and its behavior)

Comments (Unusual facts about the organism, conservation issues, etc.)

In the "real" world, a scientist observes an organism and collects data to prepare a natural history. In our "surreal" exercise, students use the process of scientific observation to describe physical characteristics and their imaginations to prepare other portions of the natural history. Have your students examine examples of natural histories from animal or plant identification guides. Notice how organisms have adaptations that allow them to live in their environment (e.g., flounders camouflage to blend in with their environment; some crabs have large, crushing claws to crush shells). Often, an author will describe how the animal uses its adaptation(s) in the "Biology" section. In "The Exquisite Sea Corpse," notice the "adaptations" your animal has and how they might help that animal to live in its marine environment (of your choice).

Also consider the connections between habitat and geographical range. Think about the habitat in which the "Exquisite Sea Corpse" lives. Is that habitat found only in one or a few particular geographic area(s) and, if so, how might that be important? The "Exquisite Sea Corpse" may also be limited by its temperature tolerance. Is it stenothermal (can tolerate a narrow range of temperatures) or eurythermal (can tolerate a wide range of temperatures)? In what climactic region would the "Exquisite Sea Corpse" be most comfortable, and why? What habitats are typically found there?