

Approach: One to one
 Focus: Habitats and adaptation
 Resources: 4 pictures

Questions / instructions:

In this activity you will be looking at pictures of two animals and thinking about their similarities and differences.

Show pictures 1 & 2 (possum & rabbit).



This is a picture of a possum and this is a picture of a rabbit. I'm going to ask you some questions about these animals so have a careful look at both pictures.

Allow time.

Now think about where each animal lives and how it lives.

1. Tell me about where the possum lives. Where does it make its home?

bush/forest/trees 98 (98) 99 (99)

2. Tell me about where the rabbit lives. Where does it make its home?

Usual habitat:

fields/hills/grass/paddocks 41 (43) 47 (35)

underground in holes/burrows/warrens 79 (76) 86 (89)

Give student picture 1: possum.

3. Let's look at the possum. What is special about this animal that helps it survive and live in its natural surroundings?

PROMPT: *How does that help it to survive?*

Possible features:

[claws for climbing/eating; fur for warmth or camouflage; tail for balance; whiskers for sense of space; large eyes to see in dark; sharp teeth for eating]

2 or more relevant features plus good justification 18 (20) 38 (44)

1 relevant feature plus good justification 23 (30) 25 (17)

2 or more relevant features but no justification 5 (8) 7 (9)

1 feature, not justified 11 (7) 9 (13)

Give student picture 2: rabbit.

4. Let's look at the rabbit. What is special about this animal that helps it survive and live in its natural surroundings?

PROMPT: *How does that help it to survive?*

Possible features:

[large feet and claws for digging burrows; large back legs for running fast; large ears to hear danger easily, fur for warmth and camouflage; large eyes to see in dark; big sharp front teeth for cutting/eating grass and leaves]

2 or more relevant features plus good justification 20 (26) 38 (42)

1 relevant feature plus good justification 22 (22) 19 (21)

2 or more relevant features but no justification 7 (9) 9 (9)

1 feature, not justified 7 (9) 9 (5)

Show pictures 3 & 4 (possum feet & rabbit feet).



% responses 2003 ('99)
 year 4 year 8

		% responses 2003 ('99)	
		year 4	year 8
5.	This time look carefully at the animals' feet. Why do you think possum and rabbit feet are different?		
6.	What is special about a possum's feet that helps it live and survive?		
7.	What is special about a rabbit's feet that helps it live and survive?		
Based on all three questions:			
	explains that feet have different functions (e.g. climbing for possum, digging for rabbit)	58 (55)	81 (73)
	Possums' feet: [sharp claws for feeding, climbing, defense]		
	mentions claws and 2–3 functions	12 (15)	23 (22)
	mentions claws and 1 function	43 (37)	51 (49)
	mentions claws but no function	24 (24)	18 (18)
	Rabbits' feet: [large back legs for fast travel, defense and burrowing; front feet for holding food, defense and burrowing]		
	1 or more features with good explanation	33 (31)	52 (48)
	1 or more features without useful explanation	30 (36)	30 (31)
	Total Score: 17–20	8 (8)	23 (24)
	13–16	22 (21)	33 (27)
	9–12	26 (31)	26 (28)
	5–8	31 (31)	15 (20)
	0–4	13 (9)	3 (1)

Commentary:

Students showed quite good knowledge and analytical skills about the habitats and adaptation of possums and rabbits. About 25 percent more year 8 than year 4 students scored above 12. Overall, there was no discernible change between 1999 and 2003.