

Clownfish Tag

Introduction



In the book *On Kiki's Reef*, author Carol L. Malnor introduces the concept of teamwork (symbiosis) among sea creatures that live on a coral reef. In this activity, children play an active game as a way to experience the partnership between clownfish and anemones.

Materials Needed

- ◆ On Kiki's Reef
- ◆ Playing area large enough to accommodate your entire class.

Key Concepts

- ◆ Species depend upon one another and relationships may be mutually beneficial (symbiosis) or competitive.
- ◆ Clownfish and anemones work together to share food and protect each other.

Procedure

1. Read the page from *On Kiki's Reef* about clownfish and anemones.
2. Explain to the students that they are going to play a tag game about clownfish and anemones. The object of the game is for a predator (large fish) to tag a clownfish. A clownfish is "safe" and can't be tagged when protected by anemones.
3. Divide students into groups of three consisting of two anemones and one clownfish.
4. Have groups spread out over the playing area with a clownfish standing in between two anemones. Choose a clownfish from one of the groups to become the "predator."
5. When the predator yells "swim," all of the clownfish must leave the safety of their anemones and "swim" (run around) avoiding the predator. A clownfish can dart into a pair of anemones for safety, but can't go into the same pair more than once. Only one clownfish can go into a pair of anemones at one time.
6. Anemones can protect the clownfish from a predator by waving their venomous tentacles (arms). However, they are anchored to the ocean floor and cannot move their feet. If a predator is touched by an anemone, the predator is frozen for a count of 5 seconds.
7. If a clownfish is tagged, he/she becomes the predator, and a new round begins.

Note: To speed up the game you can choose more than one predator or make the playing area smaller (habitat destruction).

Nature Connections

- ◆ Follow up the game with some of these questions:
 - Did they observe cooperation?
 - What strategies did the anemones use to protect the clownfish?
 - Did any predators get stung by anemones?
 - How did the size of the habitat affect the game?
- ◆ Explore other partnerships found in the story: cleaner fish and groupers, angelfish and turtle, snails and coral, crabs and coral.

Additional Resources

Watch a video of clownfish swimming among anemones:

<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/kids/animals-pets-kids/fish-kids/clownfish-kids/>

Read fun facts about clownfish:

<http://www.ducksters.com/animals/clownfish.php>
<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/clown-anemonefish/>