Suggested Reading list

Lesson 1


In this guide to testudo, E.J. Pirog highlights the specific natural habitat, description, mating habits, diet and breeding tendencies of 5 Mediterranean tortoises. The Russian tortoise is one of the most widely exported testudos and is facing declines in its numbers due to human intervention. This complete guide to tortoises has many useful suggestions for the care and feeding of a pet tortoise. Much information is provided about breeding in captivity and covers a wide range of health issues for tortoises. Many people are interested in keeping tortoises due to their gentle nature and simply because these dinosaur like creatures are very interesting. This book is helpful to understand the tortoise’s history in the wild, and to help potential tortoise owners choose the right tortoise for them.

Lesson 2


Beginning with a brief overview of the relationship of turtles and tortoises to reptiles this book covers the lifecycle of one particular testudine. The sea turtle is detailed in this illustrated book which also contains actual photographs of sea turtles. There are similarities and differences listed between types of turtles and a whole section on how the baby turtle makes its way from the nest to the sea and back home again to lay her eggs. Threats to the animal are detailed as well as the conservation of the sea turtle.
Lesson 3


This book gives a brief description of the difference between turtles and tortoises. It then focuses on different types of turtles from around the world. There are focus sections on: Island Giants, snapping turtles, Green turtle nests, sea turtles, desert tortoises, and rare chelonians. There are also descriptions of turtles from different places, such as: Europe and the Mediterranean, Africa and Madagascar, Asian chelonians, American chelonians, and Australasian chelonians. Other topics covered in the book include: the turtle shell, how the body works, familiar faces, strange species, temperature check, plodders and swimmers, eyes, ears and noses, what chelonians eat, turtle hunters, courtship, eggs and nests, hatching and young, survival games, ancient chelonians (with timeline), living relatives (with timeline), chelonians and people, and conservation (eco-tourism, controlling trade, etc). A suggested way for using this book in the classroom would be to gather information on the differences between turtles and tortoises. Another good use of the book is to have students pick a focus turtle or focus region in the world, and do further research on those particular turtles. This book offers great outlines for many different types of chelonians, so a good place to start. Another great part of this book is that there is a timeline of turtles. Therefore, this book could be used to discuss ancient turtles, and the history of turtles, with SERC fossils if available.

Lesson 4


This book mentions various characteristics of tortoises, including: physical characteristics, habitat or ecosystem, survival strategies, social behavior (ex: males fighting and hissing during mating season), mating and laying eggs. It also discusses the sea turtle, including: types, physical features, ecosystem, diet, mating, laying eggs, and hatchlings. There is a section at the end called “A Quick Look at the Giant Turtle” which gives brief descriptions of various types of tortoises and turtles, describing each chelonian’s genus and species, location, weight and length. It also mentions if the species is endangered. One suggested way for including the book in classroom is to have the book available at one of the stations (station 5), for students to generate ideas for their tortoise projects. This would also be a good book to use to compare/contrast turtles and tortoises, as well as compare/contrast different species. A discussion around the question of how/why turtles that large survive could be another use of this book.
Lesson 5


This book discusses anatomy of turtles and tortoises, freshwater turtles, sea turtles, and turtle endangerment in a 55 page easy to read high interest non-fiction book. Every other page is highlighted with beautifully colorful pictures of turtles in their natural habitats. Under each picture is an informative caption. The book can be read from cover to cover, from caption to caption, or simply for research purposes. At the end of lesson 5 I suggest this book as an activity for students that finish early or are highly proficient, however this book can be enjoyed by everyone in the classroom and should be made available during free time and recess.

Lesson 6


This book perfectly and interestingly communicates to children the meaning of a simple food chain. It focuses on the transfer of energy through the food chain and how the link is formed at each level. It uses examples that increase in size gradually for students to better understand the concept of food chain in varying ecosystems. It brings in the role of all organisms from producers, herbivores, carnivores, omnivores right up to the decomposers. It ends with a connection to human beings and their role in the transfer of energy.

This book will capture students’ attention as it uses a rhythmic approach to capture the key concepts. It can be used in a 6th grade class to engage students and also help them recollect their prior knowledge. It is an excellent way to begin the lesson “Can My Habitat Survive Without Me?” as the lesson relies on students’ understanding of the energy transferred at every link in the food web.


This book focuses on the introduction of the key vocabulary such as food chain, food web, producers and so on. It outlines the concepts by providing simple examples within each category. It relates to the food pyramid to help children understand the fact that energy decreases as we go higher up in the pyramid. It also talks about how organisms travel to find more food, linking several food chains and ecosystems. It ends with people’s role in the ecosystem and what we can do to conserve it.

This book can be used as an extra reading for students after the lesson, in order to expand the concept of food web.
Lesson 7


This book is something special. It is a narrative fiction story about the life of a turtle from birth to becoming a mother. The theme of the book is all the hardship that a turtle faces in its everyday life throughout the year. From nearly being eaten as an egg by a raccoon, to nearly being eaten by a fish as a baby turtle. The turtle goes on to brave sharks and fish nets later to swim back up onto the beach where it was born to lay eggs. What is so wonderful about this book is it provides plenty of non-fiction facts and concepts while telling a story that all ages can enjoy. The last four pages of the book provide the reader with information about sea turtle conservation and a guide to the many different sea turtle species. I chose this book to go along with lesson 7 because it introduces a type of turtle that the students did not get a chance to explore in this lesson. It works great as continued reading and exploration about turtles.

Lesson 8


This book is very interesting and focuses on the dangers faced by the turtles. It begins with providing a brief introduction about them, the different types and their habitats. It also provides a vivid description of the characteristics of the eight sea turtle species that are alive today. It then continues to provide details about the threats to the sea turtle community due to human invasion and habitat loss. It also extensively outlines the conservative steps taken to protect the sea turtles.

This book is used as part of an activity in the lesson to intrigue students. Showing the pictures of the book as it is read will further engage them in it.


This book has been written in such a way to provide students a lot information about the life of the turtle from start to end. It begins with an interesting description about turtles. It moves on to explain how a turtle is born and the dangers that it faces as an egg and a baby. It then focuses on the life of a turtle in the ocean with its diet. It then
explains the behavior of the turtles – travelling long distances. It ends with the status of the sea turtles and the conservative measures.

This book can be used as an alternative to the book suggested in “Can You Save Me?” It provides similar information and uses pictures extensively, which could be a great way to intrigue students. Alternately, this book could be used as extended reading activity by the students to gain more information about sea turtles.


This book provides an elaborate description of the turtles by comparing its various family members. It begins with dating its existence on earth to the time of the dinosaurs. It provides a physical description of the turtles and describes in detail its shell. It highlights the use of the shell by various family members for different purposes. It also describes how the turtle relies on its senses in the shell, tail and feet to make sense of the environment and detect dangers. It goes on to explain its life cycle and the dangers its face along with the various steps taken for its conservation.

This book can be used as an extended reading of Lesson 8, if students want to know more about turtles. The “Family Life” and “Turtle Rescue” chapters of this book can be used as an alternative to the book suggested in this lesson. This book displays a lot of pictures along with the relevant information and would prove to be interesting to students.