



# Animal Tails:

*explorations of the animal world through connections to literature*



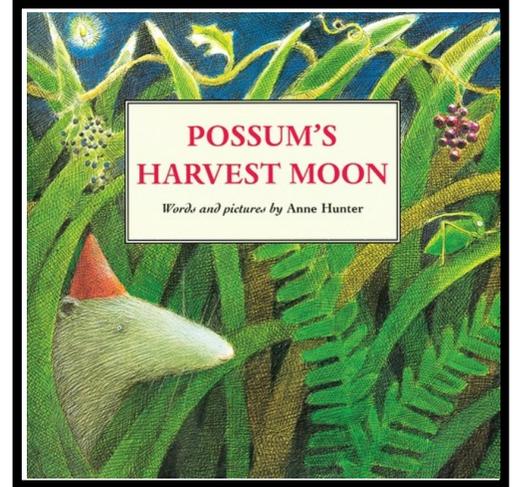
## **Possum's Harvest Moon**

by Anne Hunter

**Grade:** K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

### **Gather your Gear**

- Possum's Harvest Moon book or log on to watch the storybook reading
- an outdoor space
- paper and pencil
- crayons, markers, colored pencils
- computer and adult to help you
- noisemaking household items such as
  - comb
  - pots and pans
  - cups
  - door stoppers
  - beads



### **Get Ready**

*You can help your child make connections by thinking about concepts before reading the story.*

- What types of animals have you seen or heard at a zoo?
- What types of animals have you seen or heard at night?
- Do you think wild animals interact with each other?

### **Read**

*Read the book, stopping to explore key story ideas. Below are some prompts to help guide you.*

- In what season is this story taking place?
- What do you think most of the animals will be doing over the winter? Why?
- What kind of food does Possum gather for his soirée?

### **Reflect**

*Briefly discuss what was important or what we learned. Below are some questions to guide you.*

- When are all of the animals in the story awake?
- Why is Possum hosting a soirée on this particular night?
- When Possum says "goodnight," is it nighttime, or is it about to be morning?



# Animal Tails:



*explorations of the animal world through connections to literature*

## Relate

### Create connections to the idea through activities.

#### Activity 1: Family Soirée

In this activity you will explore ways to make music in your own home without an instrument.

1. Gather all of the items you can find that make sound. These could be items such as cardboard boxes, rubber bands, loose coins, pots and pans, hair combs, etc.
2. Play with each item to see what sounds are made, and which items might sound good when played together.
3. Now that you've picked your instruments, host a family soirée in which you, and maybe your parents or siblings, play the music for others to dance to.

#### Activity 2: Daytime Feast

Possum provided snacks for the nocturnal friends attending his soirée. In this activity, you will plan snacks for animals that might attend a tea party during the day.

1. Find an outside place to sit and watch the animals, including the insects, in your area. Make sure to take notes about which animals you saw. Were they eating anything? What were they munching on?
2. After spending some time watching the animals in their natural habitat, head back inside. It's research time!
3. Using your list of animals and insects you saw in nature, and with the help of an adult, look up their diets, or things those animals naturally eat in the wild.
4. Once you know what each of the animals eats, start planning your tea party menu. Make sure that the animals you decide to invite are animals you can feed!
5. When you have your menu planned, you can either design a menu using paper and coloring utensils or draw out how you would set the party table with all of the food items on it.
6. If you learned what some of the birds like to eat, and were watching animals in your own backyard, you and your family could even put up a bird feeder with their preferred seed!

**Did you know:** Opossums are omnivores and will eat almost any food item they can find. They particularly like insects such as ticks.

- Since opossums can eat almost anything, they can live in a wide variety of environments, including near human homes.
- They have opposable thumbs on their back feet, which help them move through trees.
- Opossums build their nests in trees.
- Opossums mostly rely on their senses of smell, touch, and hearing, although they do have good eyesight at night.
- Opossums eat insects, plants, fruits, grains, and carrion (hint: vultures also eat carrion).
- Opossums typically do not carry rabies.



# Animal Tails:



*explorations of the animal world through connections to literature*

## **Opossum Fun Facts:**

- Female opossums have a pouch in which their babies spend the first few weeks of their lives, making them the only marsupials in North America.
- Opossum tails are prehensile, which means they can wrap them around branches or other items. Even though their tails are prehensile, they do not hang upside from them. Instead, they use their tails for balance and carrying nesting materials with them.
- Opossums and possums are two different kinds of mammals. Possums are herbivores which live in Australia and New Guinea. Opossums are omnivores found in North America.
- Opossums are known to fall asleep on roads when the pavement is warm, so keep an eye out for them when driving!

## **It takes a team.... join ours**

Help us save species by joining the “Zoo Conservation Corps” and raise awareness about wild animals, their habitats and why conserving both is so important. If you or your family are on social media, post pictures of your activity to share with your family and friends what you have learned. Use the hashtag #OnlyZooATL so that we can see all your great work!

## **Want to know more....**

- Want to know where to find opossum at Zoo Atlanta:  
<https://zooatlanta.org/what-is-wieland-wildlife-home/>
- A great site for information is National Geographic:  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/group/opossums/>
- Need to know what to do with an injured or orphaned opossum:  
<http://www.awarewildlife.org>