Super Survivors
3rd Grade

Duration
20-30 minutes

Location
La Brea Tar Pits Museum

Supplies
- Worksheet
- Pencil
- Clipboard (optional)

Standards
NGSS

3-LS-4-1, 3-LS-4-3

LS2.C, LS4.C, LS4.D

S+E Practices

1, 3, 4, 6, 7

CCSS ELA

W.3.2, SL.3.4

CA State

Science Grade 3

Life Sciences 3.a, 3.d

Vocabulary
Fossil • Adaptation • Extinct • Extant • Carnivore • Omnivore • Scavenger • Predator • Mammal • Social

🔍 *Student Work*

Concepts

- Adaptations help animals survive in their environments.

- Environmental change at the end of the Ice Age was a factor in the extinction of some animals, while others survived and are still found in California today.

Objectives

- Students will understand that some animals in this area went extinct at the end of the Ice Age, while others did not.

- Students will gather evidence about two animals from the Museum — the dire wolf and the coyote to form a hypothesis about why one canid species went extinct and the other did not.

Outline

1. Review the idea that adaptations help animals survive. While some species' adaptations allow them to survive though periods of environmental change, others do not, and these species go extinct.

2. At the Museum, students will identify the characteristics of extinct and extant animals from Rancho La Brea to form a hypothesis about why some animals went extinct while others survived.

Pre-Visit

Review the idea that adaptations help animals survive in their habitats. During the Ice Age, Southern California was home to many species with specialized adaptations. When the environment changed, some species went extinct, and others did not.

If necessary, review the vocabulary words with students prior to your trip.

Museum Visit

For this activity, students will focus on the two common dog species discovered at Rancho La Brea: the dire wolf (*canis dirus*) and the coyote (*canis latrans*). Students will identify how each of these species survive, and then use their research to complete a Venn Diagram comparing the two.

When they have completed their research students will form a hypothesis about which characteristics and behaviors helped the coyote survive the Ice Age and thrive alongside humans today.

Helpful Hints

The dire wolves are located across from the dire wolf skull wall, and the coyote is located near the Timeline.

Complete the matching activity!

Two species of dog were common in Rancho La Brea during the Ice Age: the dire wolf and the coyote. While the dire wolf is now extinct, the coyote still lives in Southern California. Today, you will form a hypothesis about the adaptations that helped the coyote survive.
After closely examining both specimens inside the Museum, draw a line from each word in the left column to the animal that it most closely describes. If you think that a word describes both animals, draw a line to both. You do not have to use every word in the list.

Predator

Mammal

DIRE WOLF

Scavenger

Carnivore

Omnivore
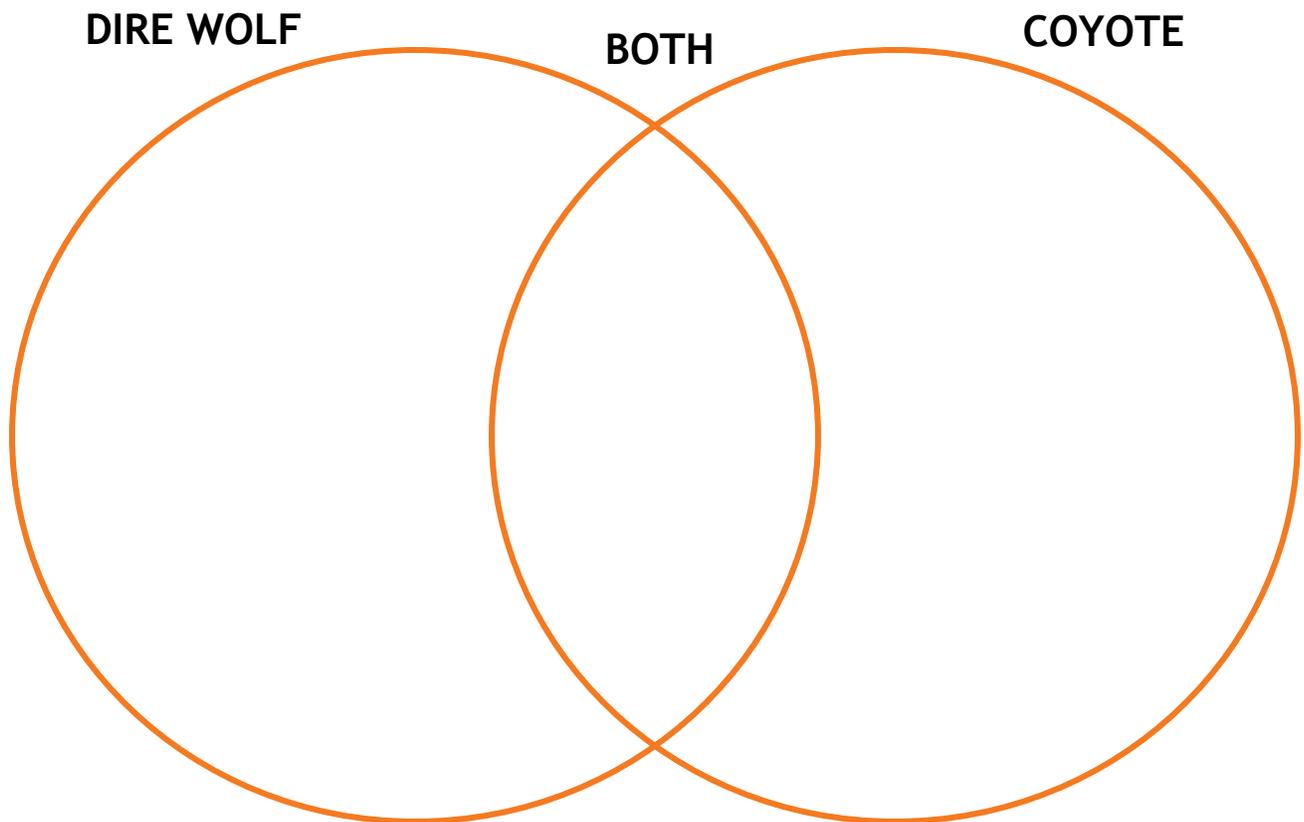
Larger than I am

Smaller than I am

COYOTE

Four Legs

Diagram your findings...

Fill in the Venn diagram using the information from the first part of this activity.

DIRE WOLF   **BOTH**   **COYOTE**

Which coyote adaptation do you think played the biggest role in helping it survive the end of the Ice Age and why?

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