



## LEMURS VS. LUMBERJACKS

Lemurs are endangered in Madagascar primarily because of deforestation. The main reason that trees are being cut down is for slash and burn farming. That's where trees are cut and then burned to clear a large piece of land for farming. The ash that remains from the burning fertilizes the soil for healthy crops. The problem is that the land remains fertilized for just a couple of years. Farmers then need to move on to new land where they slash and burn again.

There are solutions and better options to slash and burning such as growing rice paddies (farming a lot more food in a lot less land) or replanting trees. However, trees are being cut down at an alarming rate and are not being replanted fast enough. This is a great detriment to the lemur species.

To convey this message in a story, I decided to conduct a lesson titled, "LEMURS VS. LUMBERJACKS." (The students are certainly free to use another title. I simply gave them that title to get their minds thinking.)

Now for the lesson!

1. Tell the story line: *The lemurs get tired of the lumberjacks cutting down their habitat and they plan an attack.*
2. Brainstorm different qualities of different lemurs and ways that they can "fight against the lumberjacks."
  - The Red-Ruffed lemurs live at the top of the canopy and love fruit.*
  - They could "shoot fruit" from above.*
  - The Coquerel Sifakas (pronounced kockril Sherfocks) can leap up to 30 feet*
  - They could catch the lumberjacks off guard by hopping onto them from far away.*
  - The Ring-Tailed lemurs stink fight by rubbing their terrible scent on their tails and wafting the smell.*
  - The Aye-Aye lemur is nocturnal. It is feared for its red eyes and ghostly vocalizations. It also has a long skinny skeletal middle finger and could poke the lumberjacks' eyes while they're sleeping.*
3. Encourage the students to use 2-4 lemurs in their story.
4. Show the 5 sections of the story:
  - i. Use sounds and introduce the problem.
  - ii. The lemurs meet and plan
  - iii. The 1st lemurs and 2<sup>nd</sup> lemurs plan to...
  - iv. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lemurs plan to...
  - v. The attack and lemurs' victory



Now to write!

Guide the students through the following steps. They are free to use their own words. Remind them that ANYTHING can happen in their story as long as they follow the steps to keep their story organized. (I've written examples in italics for your own guidance.)

1. Begin the story with sound. Write sounds that are heard using onomatopoeias.  
*Chop! Chop! Chop! Tiiiiimbeeeeeer!*
2. Name the problem.  
*The lumberjacks continue to cut down trees in the Malagasy forests. The lemurs are getting more and more crowded in the trees that are left and very tired of it!*
3. Write about how the lemurs come together and discuss ideas to fight.  
*The lemurs start whispering and conspiring amongst themselves.*  
*"Let's plan an attack."*  
*"We've got to scare these creatures out of our territory."*  
*"If we all troop together we can defeat these ruthless, selfish and persistent tree cutters."*  
*All agreeing, the Red-Ruffed, Coquerel Sifaka, Ring-Tailed and Aye-Aye lemurs got together to make a plan.*
4. Write what the Red-Ruffed lemurs say they will do. Try not to use the word said.  
*"We'll attack from the top canopy, throwing hard pieces of fruit right to the tops of their heads," insisted the Red-Ruffed lemurs.*
5. Write what the Coquerel Sifakas say they will do. Try not to use the word said.  
*"Great! We can leap 30 feet attacking them from behind with a tight hold that will knock them to the ground," added the Coquerel Sifakas.*
6. Write what the Ring-Tailed say they will do. Try not to use the word said.  
*"Superb! We'll come in as a troop with our tails held high, wafting our most vicious stink smell until they can't catch their breath," laughed the Ring-Tailed lemurs.*
7. Write what the Aye-Ayes say they will do. Try not to use the word said.  
*"Perfect!" And we'll cover the night shift. If any lumberjacks happen to come in at night, we'll sneak up on them with our red eyes, ghostly vocalizations and poke at their eyes with our long middle fingers," assured the Aye-Aye lemurs.*
8. Write the ending of the story that assures the lemurs fought and won.  
*The lemurs went through with their plan day after day, night after night until the lumberjacks weakened and finally refused to return.*