

Eel Movement Puppet

Learning Level

PreK- Grade 1

Subject Areas

Life Science

Preparation

Cut paper in half in advance. Show some videos of eel movement.

Duration

30 minutes

Lesson Standards

MA Curriculum Framework for Science and Technology/Engineering (MA STE Standards):

PreK-LS1-1 (MA). Compare, using descriptions and drawings, the external body parts of animals (including humans) and plants and explain functions of some of the observable body parts.

PreK-LS1-3(MA). Use their five senses in their exploration and play to gather information.

PreK-PS2-1(MA). Using evidence, discuss ideas about what is making something move the way it does and how some movements can be controlled.

1-LS1-1. Use evidence to explain that (a) different animals use their body parts and senses in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food, water, and air.

How do eels move? Students will build a model of an eel and practice their motor skills to mimic different types of eel movement.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate how eels use their whole body to move through the water.

Materials

- Green paper cut in half lengthwise (~4.25" x 11"), 3 pieces per student
- Eel Head & Tail template
- Markers or crayons to color head & tail
- Wooden craft sticks (2 per student)
- Tape or glue sticks
- Scissors

Vocabulary

- **Undulation:** moving smoothly up and down like the motion of rolling waves

Background Information

An **eel** is a type of fish in the order *Anguilliforms*, which contains about 800 species. They have long bodies shaped like noodles or snakes. Since they do not have a strong tail fin like a shark, eels swim through the water by moving their whole body like a rolling wave. This movement is called an **undulation**. Their back (dorsal) and bottom (anal) fins are elongated along their body to help stabilize the eels as they swim. Different types of eels move in many ways, like moray eels, garden eels, and ribbon eels.

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Procedure

1. Ask students to describe an eel. If possible, show them images of different types of eels and ask them to describe the shape of the eel's body and observations about its other features (color, pattern, teeth, eyes, etc). Eels have a long body shaped like a *noodle* or a *snake*. Their back fin (dorsal fin) and bottom fin (anal fin) are stretched out along their body and connect to form a tail fin (caudal fin). Some eels like American eel and European eel have side fins (pectoral fins).
2. Ask students to pretend that their arm is an eel, and their hand is the head. Practice making movements to act like an eel swimming through the water. Eels move their whole body in an undulation movement like a rolling wave. Use your hand to move side to side like you're drawing a letter "S" in the air, and follow that motion with the rest of your arm. Eels can reverse this motion to swim backwards, too.
3. Pass out materials for making a model of an eel. Each student should get 3 strips of paper (~4.5" x 11"), 1 head template, 1 tail template, 2 wooden craft sticks, tape/glue sticks and scissors.
4. Starting with the short end of the paper, fold it back and forth like an accordion with ~1" width. Use tape or glue stick to attach all 3 accordions into one long piece.
5. Next, cut out the head and tail template. Fold the head in half at the nose, and fold the tail in half at the tip of the tail. Use tape or glue to attach these to each end of the accordion.
6. For the last step, tape a wooden craft stick on the accordion just after the head and just before the tail. These are your handles to bring your eel to life as a puppet!
7. Demonstrate some ways the eel can move, making sure to follow the movement of the head with the rest of the body. Can you make your eel swim up and down, or side to side? Can you make your eel hide in some "rocks"? Can you make your eel stand up straight like a garden eel?
8. Play music and have an eel parade! This can be a free play experience to model different eel movements, or take turns being the leader and deciding how everyone should move their eel puppets together.

Optional Extension Activity: Work together as a class to make a giant moray eel puppet using larger paper (full sheets or rolls of butcher paper). Add multiple rulers as handles. As a class, practice following the leader and working together to make your eel swim through the classroom.



