

Vocabulary

Retrieval

Inference

Clarify

Visualise

Note

Working Together

by Dan Smith

Part 1

Nature is full of incredible animals working together. This is called 'group behaviour', and for some animals it's the only way they can survive.

One of the main reasons why animals work together in groups is to **protect themselves**.

Meerkats, which live in the African **savannah**, form communities of as many as 50 individuals. These **communities** are known as 'mobs' or 'gangs'. Meerkats dig **burrows** into the sand and while their young play, the adults stand guard, watching for **predators**. If a meerkat sees a **threat**, it will squeal and stare in the direction of the threat so that all the other meerkats know where the danger is coming from.

Crows also use group behaviour to protect themselves from predators. If a hawk is spotted **lurking** around crow nests, crows work together to drive the hawk away. The crows will make a lot of noise and they will **swoop** and nip the predator. This is known as 'mobbing'. **Imagine being mobbed by dozens of angry crows!**

Sea otters rarely come onto land, so when they sleep, they form **rafts** to keep themselves afloat. They do this by grouping together and **holding hands** – which looks exactly as cute as it sounds! Some rafts of sea otters have been known to contain up to 200 **individuals**.



Clarify: Can you think of any animals that work or live in groups? **C**

Clarify: What ways do you already know that animals protect themselves? e.g. spines and spikes, poison, sharp teeth and claws. **C**

What impression of meerkats do these names give the reader of meerkats? **V**

Check understanding of the word 'predator'. **V**

What impression does the word 'lurking' give of the hawk's behaviour? **V**

'mobbing' Refer back to the name given to meerkat communities. **V**

Check understanding of the word 'rafts'. **V**

Check understanding of the word 'individual'. **V**

Clarify: Explain this is an area of flat grassland found in hot countries. **C**

Explore how the children might use the word community e.g. school community, local community. Ask them what they think it means in this context. **V**

Check understanding of the word 'burrow'. **V**

Check understanding of the word 'threat'. **V**

Check understanding of the word 'swoop'. What else 'swoops'? **V**

What impression does this give of the nature of sea otters? **I**

Visualise: How would you feel if this happened? What would it be like? **Vi**

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Part 2

Another reason why animals work together in groups is to help them **hunt and gather food**.

Killer whales work in teams of up to **40 members**. They locate their prey using **echolocation**, which is a series of **clicking sounds that bounce off things** in the water – including their prey! They then work together to get the prey alone, or into small groups, before moving in for the kill.

A honey bee colony has workers which spend most of their time gathering **nectar** from plants. They use the nectar as food. When a worker bee finds a good place to gather nectar, it tells the other workers where it is by doing a **special dance**. They then collect the nectar and take it back to the **colony** to share it with the other bees and to feed the young, which are called larva.

Ask the children if they know of any animals that work together in this way? **I**

Visualise: Show children the picture of a killer whale. Ask children to imagine what 40 whales together might look like. **Vi**

Check understanding of the word '**nectar**'. **V**

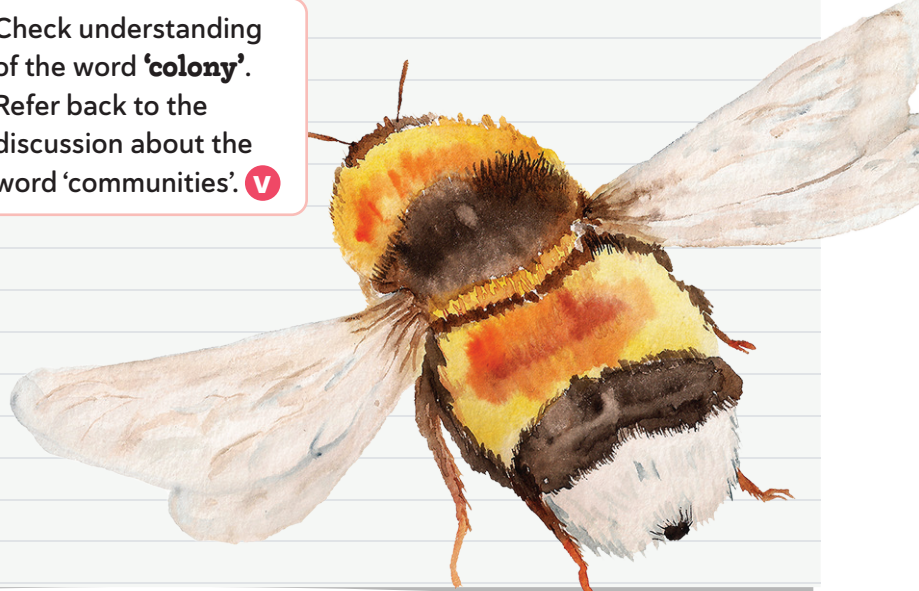
Check understanding of the word '**colony**'. Refer back to the discussion about the word 'communities'. **V**

Many people prefer to call them orca (derived from their scientific name). They are more closely related to dolphins than whales. **V**

Talk about the fact that this is a compound word and by splitting it into its root words we can work out its meaning. **V**

Note: bats also use this as a form of locating their prey

Note: this is known as a waggle dance.



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Part 3



What does this word choice tell us about the author's attitude to ants? Does this surprise you? Why? **I**

Why might this surprise the reader? **I**

Visualise: Show the children the number one million (1,000,000). Use unifix cubes to show how big a million is then ask children to imagine this number represented by ants! **Vi**

Some of the most incredible groups of animals are the **smallest**. You might hardly even notice a single ant, but it is part of one of the most

awesome groups in nature. Some species of ants live in colonies of just a few dozen, while others live in super colonies containing **millions** of individuals, but it is more common for ant colonies to be made up of several thousand ants. Different ants in the colony have different jobs. Worker ants collect food, **dig tunnels**, and take care of the eggs. **A queen ant** lives deep inside the **colony** and her job is to lay the eggs. **Drone** ants have wings, and their job is to fly away and start new colonies. Some colonies even have large soldier ants to protect the colony. By co-operating together, colonies of ants can achieve incredible things like digging huge nests, forming bridges to cross gaps, or forming rafts to survive flooding. **Ants even farm other insects for food.** Ants in a colony work so well together, it's almost as if they are each a tiny part of one giant animal.

Why might ants need to dig tunnels? **I**

Note: refer back to previous discussion

Clarify: Use a YouTube clip to explore this further if time allows. **C**

Note: Quite often it is only the queen who lays eggs to produce young ants.

What other use of the word '**drone**' are the children familiar with? Discuss how the words are linked. **V**

