

Powerful Pollinators

BEE a Pollinator



Cotton Ball Bees

Materials:

- Sidewalk chalk in a range of colors
- Colored pencils/crayons
- Flower coloring sheets (one per student)
- Clipboards - helpful but not required
- Cotton balls (one per student)

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to get students thinking about what characteristics pollinators have in common. During the Powerful Pollinators virtual field trip, students will focus on observing three main similarities between pollinators: their fuzzy bodies, their ability to fly and that they feed and gather food from flowers. This activity is designed to jump start students' thinking about one of those characteristics: fuzzy bodies.

Goals:

Students will be able to...

- Understand that the fuzzy bodies of many insect pollinators aid in the distribution of pollen.
- Identify examples of pollinators and common characteristics between them.

Step 1: Creating the Flowers

- Each student gets one blank flower coloring page and colors it in with colored pencils or crayons except for the very center of each flower.
- Next, students will color in the centers of their flowers with sidewalk chalk. Enough pressure should be applied so that chalk dust collects on the page. Do not blow or brush away this dust - it represents the flower's pollen.
- Spread the flowers out around the room, creating a "field" of flowers in your space.

Step 2: Becoming Bees

- Each student is "turned into a bee" - given a fuzzy, white cotton ball.
- Direct students to go around to the different flowers in the field and visit with as many as they like/can. While at each flower they should pretend to be looking for nectar to be taking back to their hive. There is no rush and this process does not need to be timed.
- Students can buzz and flap their arms like wings as they go around the room tapping their cotton ball down onto each flower.

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Step 3: Observations and Discussion

- After the students have had enough time to visit a good number of flowers, call the group back together and ask them to observe their cotton balls and share their findings.
- Lead them through a series of discussion questions: What colors do you see? What does the wide range of colors mean? What colors are left on the flowers? Did any of the chalk dust move around from flower to flower? In what ways are their cotton balls similar to real bees?
- Explain that in this game the cotton balls were fuzzy bee bodies and that the chalk dust is pollen. Thanks to their fuzzy bodies they were able to move pollen from one flower to another. This transfer is an important step in the process of making seeds for new flowers.

Note: By the end of this activity students' cotton balls should be covered in a range of chalk colors from all of the flowers they visited. Sometimes it is not as easy to see the different color chalk ("pollen") showing up on the different flower coloring sheets. Students may ask why it is hard to see evidence of pollen from one flower turning up on another flower. You can explain that real flowers have sticky parts that grab the new pollen but the plain sheet of paper doesn't so in this specific example it can sometimes be hard to see.

Step 4: Other Pollinators

- Ask students what about the cotton balls reminds them of real bees. Put another way, why were cotton balls used as a stand in for bees during this activity?
- On the board jot down a list of pollinators on one side.
- Next, on the other side of the board, list things that those pollinators have in common.
- Discuss the list of commonalities. Do students think anything in particular stands out as a trait that would help all of those animals be good pollinators?
- This topic specifically will be addressed during their field trip, so this activity is less about generating a perfectly correct list of traits and more about starting to brainstorm and look for patterns.



Before you turn into a bee...

Color in these flowers! Use chalk for the center and crayons or colored pencils for everything else.



SHARING the little things that run the world.