

MEERKAT

UNIT STUDY & LAPBOOK



Meerkat Unit Study and Lapbook Lessons

Scientific Classification:

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Herpestidae

Genus: Suricata

Species: suricatta

→ Complete Scientific Classification Flap Book

What is a Meerkat?

The name comes from the Dutch language and means “lake cat.” These interesting creatures live in southern Africa in the Kalahari Desert.

A meerkat, also known as a suricat, stands about 12-24 inches tall. It weighs 1 to 2 pounds and lives up to 13 years.

→ Complete Meerkats on the Map Matchbook

Meerkat Anatomy

Meerkats are built for life in the desert.

The black around the eyes help protect from the glare of the sunlight. The black works like natural sunglasses.

A meerkat has strong curved claws that are almost one-inch long. These claws help the meerkat dig burrows and hunt for food.

The meerkat uses its tail to balance when standing upright.

The meerkat has small black, crescent-shaped ears that can close when digging to keep the sand out.

They have short parallel stripes across their backs extending from the base of the tail to the shoulders. The patterns of stripes are unique to each meerkat.

The underside of the meerkat has no markings, but the belly has a patch which is only sparsely covered with hair and shows the black skin underneath. The meerkat uses this area to absorb heat while standing on its rear legs, usually early in the morning after cold desert nights.

→ Complete What Makes Me a Meerkat? Flap Book

Meet the Family:

A group of meerkats living together is called a gang or a mob and the mob can get as big as fifty meerkats, but usually they average twenty. Sometimes the meerkat shares its burrows with the yellow mongoose and ground squirrels. Meerkats also like to socialize. They share food, groom each other, snuggle, compete in foot races or a wrestling match. Meerkat babies, or pups, are born in litters of 1-5. And a female meerkat can have four litters per year. Pups stay protected in the burrows, but start to venture out at 3 weeks.

→ Complete The Mob File Folder

I'm Hungry:

The most interesting thing on a meerkats menu is venomous snakes and scorpions. They are immune to the venom--even the venom of cobras.

Meerkats also eat insects, snails, spiders, plants, rodents, birds, eggs, and lizards. Sometimes, a meerkat will eat a small bird. Meerkats get most of their water from the plants they eat.

→ Complete Meerkat Menu Simple Fold

Meerkat Chores:

The mob will share chores: guard, babysitter, and teacher.

GUARD: While the rest of the mob searches for food or plays, the guard will climb to the top of a rock and look out for their safety. This meerkat stands up on its hind legs, balances with its tail and watches for attacks from the ground and the air.

If a predator is spotted, the meerkats will make barking, peeping or whistling sounds. The guard has one alarm for ground attacks and another for air. When the alarm sounds, the meerkats race to safety--usually a hole. Each meerkat will

usually stand guard for about an hour before another meerkat takes over. The guards are on the look-out for jackals and birds of prey (such as eagles and falcons). Are meerkats tasty? I don't know, but you could ask one of their predators. The predators that hunt meerkats are jackals, eagles, and falcons. Meerkats also have to guard their young from cobras.

→ Complete Meerkat Predators Simple Fold

BABYSITTER: This meerkat watches and protects the pups. The babysitter on duty will also help move the pups if the mob needs to move to a different area.

TEACHER: A teacher can be a babysitter or the pups' mom. The pups will learn how to communicate, how to hunt poisonous scorpions and snakes, and how to forage for other food. The teacher brings them food. This way, the pups learn what they are supposed to eat.

When learning how to kill a scorpion, the teacher will remove the scorpion's tail. The pup will still have to deal with the scorpion's claws, but not the stinger in its tail.

→ Complete Meerkat Occupations Window Book

Do meerkats make good pets?

No. Unfortunately, meerkats cannot be housebroken nor can they curb the natural ability to dig. Some people have tried to make them pets, only to find that their meerkat has burrowed through the living room wall.

Meerkat Relatives:

Meerkats have a large family, including many types of mongoose.

Species	Where Do I Live?	What Do I Eat?	Other Information
Dwarf Mongoose	Africa	Mainly insects.	
Banded Mongoose	Across sub-Saharan Africa, from Gambia to Ethiopia and to South Africa.	Mainly insects.	Nomadic.
Indian Grey Mongoose	Southern India In forests and in fields.	Small mammals such as rats, as well as eggs and a variety of insects, including scorpions.	They are known for killing poisonous snakes. Endangered.
Liberian Mongoose	Liberia	Earthworms and other insects.	
Malagasy Mongoose Also known as the falanouc.	Throughout the lowland swamp and rainforest areas of northwestern and eastern Madagascar.	Mainly earthworms and small vertebrates such as mice.	Nocturnal and solitary. Endangered.
Marsh Mongoose	Throughout sub-Saharan Africa	Crabs, snails and frogs.	

→ Complete Family Photo Album

Additional Research and Lessons:

Check out other books from your local library or visit websites to learn more about meerkats.

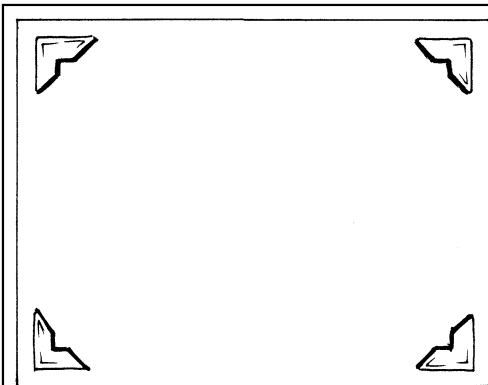
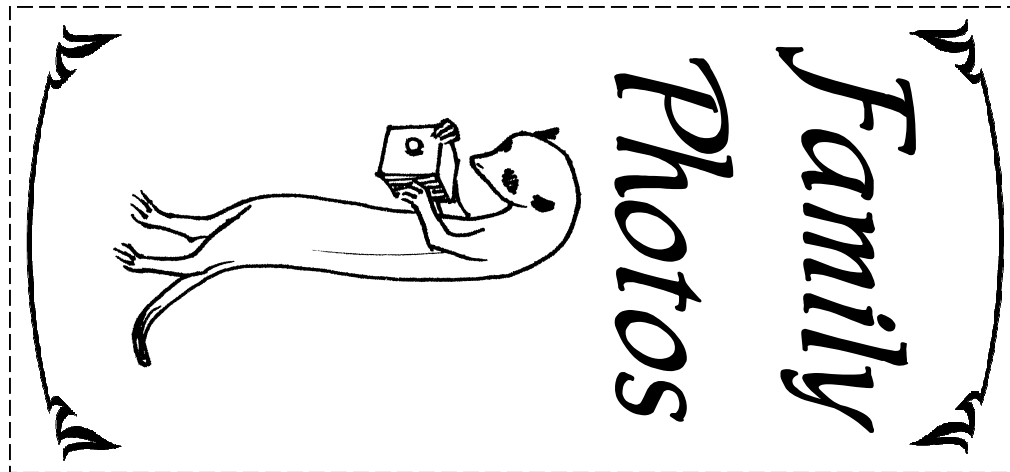
- Complete Meerkat Facts Book
- Complete the Meerkat Diagram
- Read Meerkat Mail and complete the Postcards Home

Cut shapes out. Stack together and staple. Write one meerkat fact on each page.

 <p>My MEERKAT FACT BOOK</p> <p>by _____</p>	

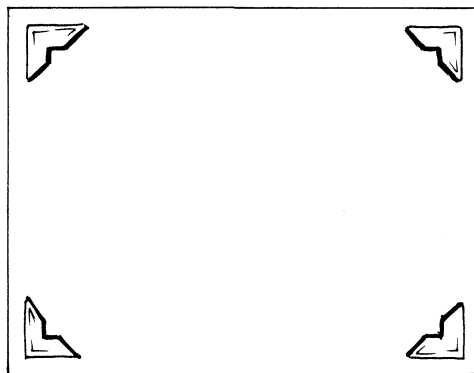
Cut out book. Fold in thirds. Paste cover on front, if desired. Paste pictures (next page) in their proper places.

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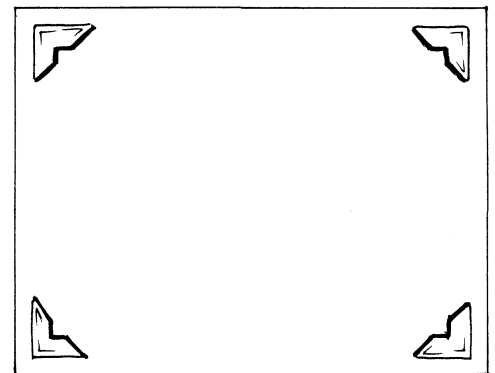
Dwarf Mongoose

Africa



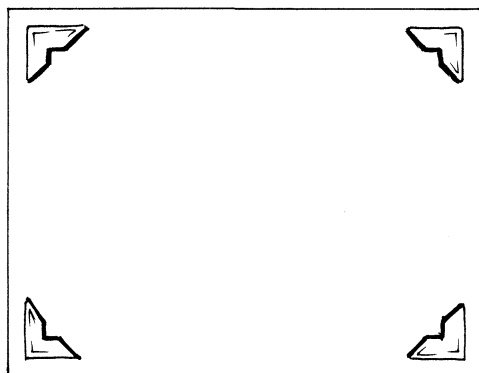
Banded Mongoose

Gambia, Ethiopia, South Africa



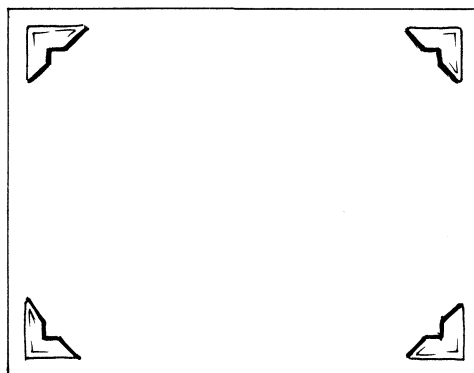
Indian Grey Mongoose

Southern India



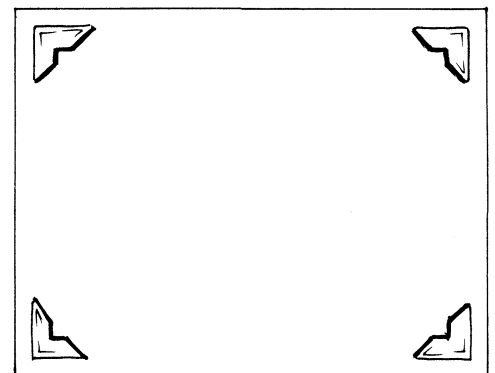
Siberian Mongoose

Siberia



Malagasy Mongoose

Madagascar

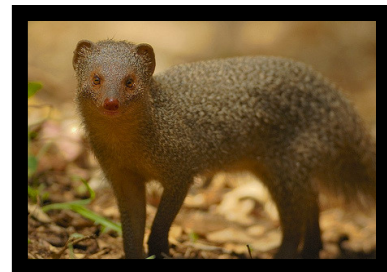
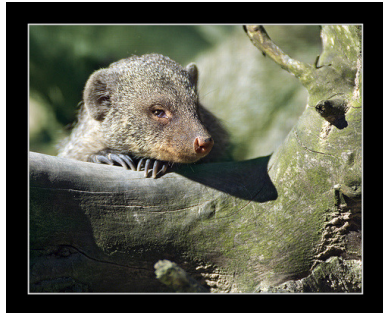


Marsh Mongoose

sub-Saharan Africa

Pictures are in the following order (left to right; top to bottom):

Dwarf Mongoose, Banded Mongoose, Indian Grey Mongoose, Liberian Mongoose, Malagasy Mongoose, and Marsh Mongoose.



Pictures of Banded Mongoose and Indian Grey compliments <http://earth-touch.com> ~ used with permission

Picture of Liberian Grey and Marsh Mongoose compliments www.lioncrusher.com ~ used with permission

Use this graphic for coloring or for a meerkat diagram.

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MEERKATS ON THE MAP

Cut book out as one piece. Fold matchbook style. Color the places in Africa where one would find meerkats. Paste inside the matchbook.



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MEERKAT FAMILY

OCCUPATIONS

BACK

COVER

Window book with 4 windows.

Indicates valley
fold.

Indicates moun-
tain fold.

Before cutting, use a pencil to lightly label/number the pages according to the numbers in the margin. Later you can erase these marks.

Cut on solid lines; fold on dotted lines.

Job Description - Guard

Handwriting practice lines consisting of eight horizontal dashed lines.

THE TEACHER

GLUE THIS PAGE
TO INSIDE OF
COVER/BACK.

Indicates valley
fold.

Job Description - Teacher

THE GUARD

Indicates moun-
fold. tain fold.

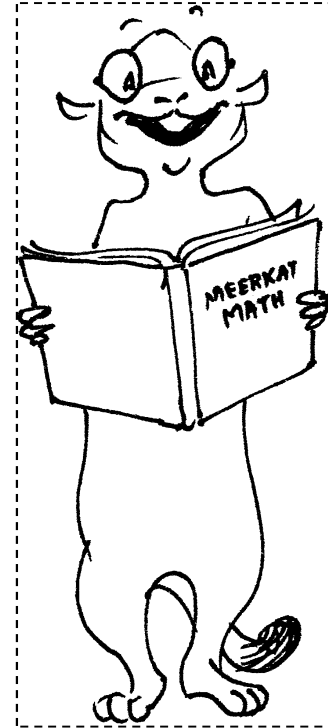
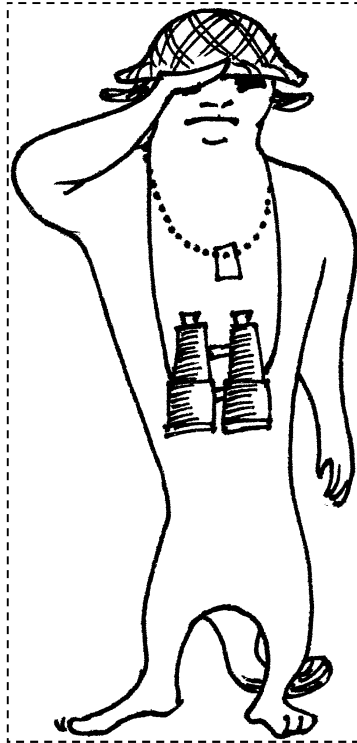
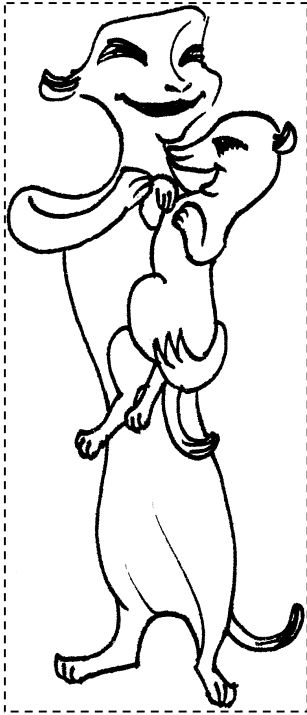
Indicates valley
fold. fold.

Job Description - Babysitter

THE
BABY-
SITTER

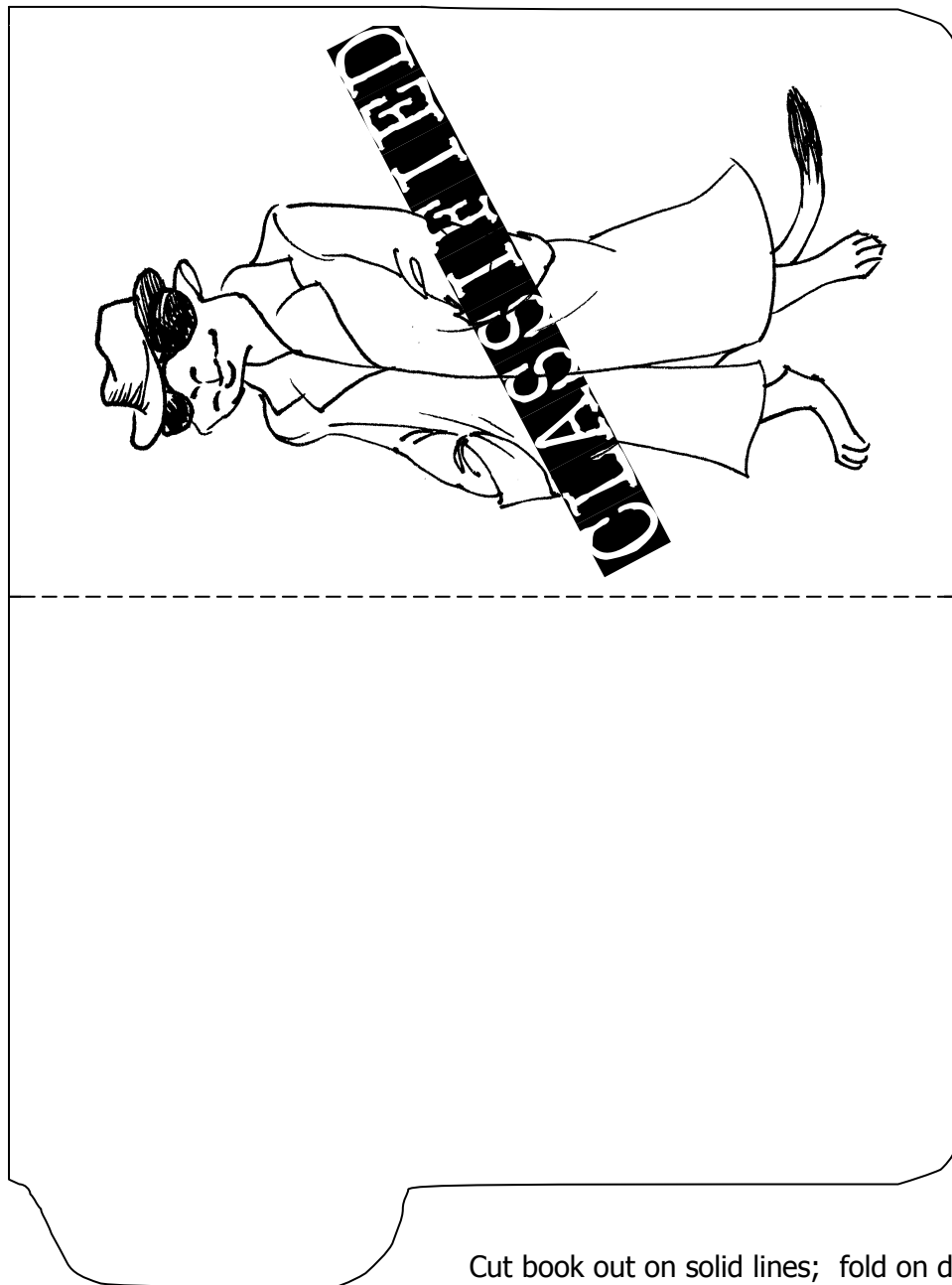
Indicates valley
fold.

GLUE THIS
SHEET TO
INSIDE OF PP
2/5.



Follow instructions on each page to construct the book. Color, cut, and paste images in appropriate places (in the windows). Use lined areas to write about each meerkat occupation.

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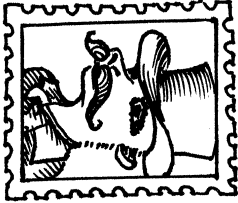


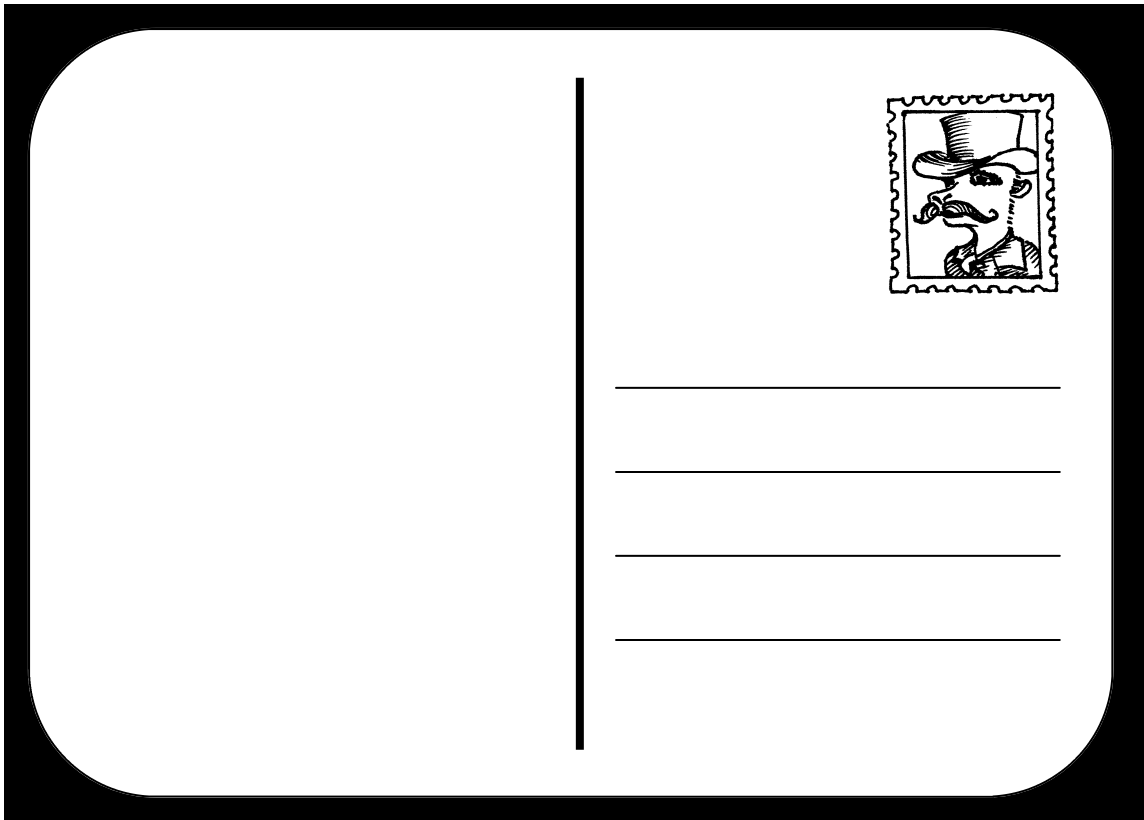
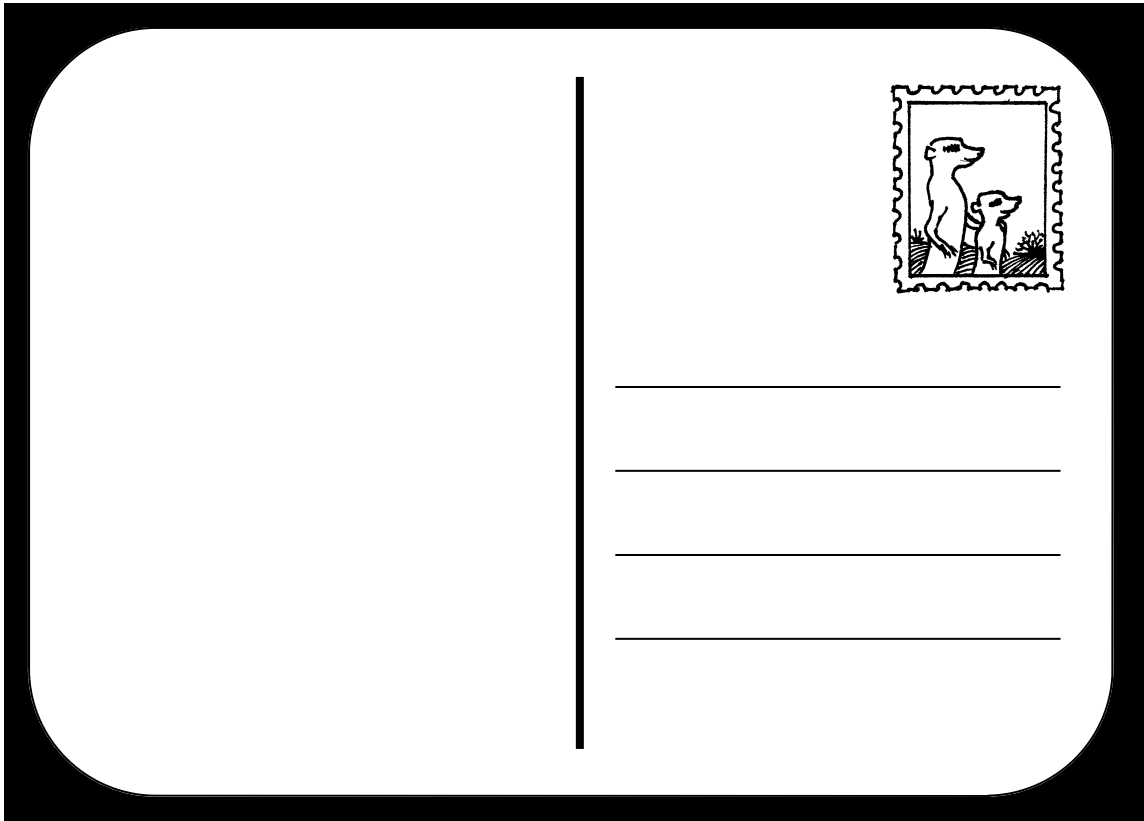
THE MOB

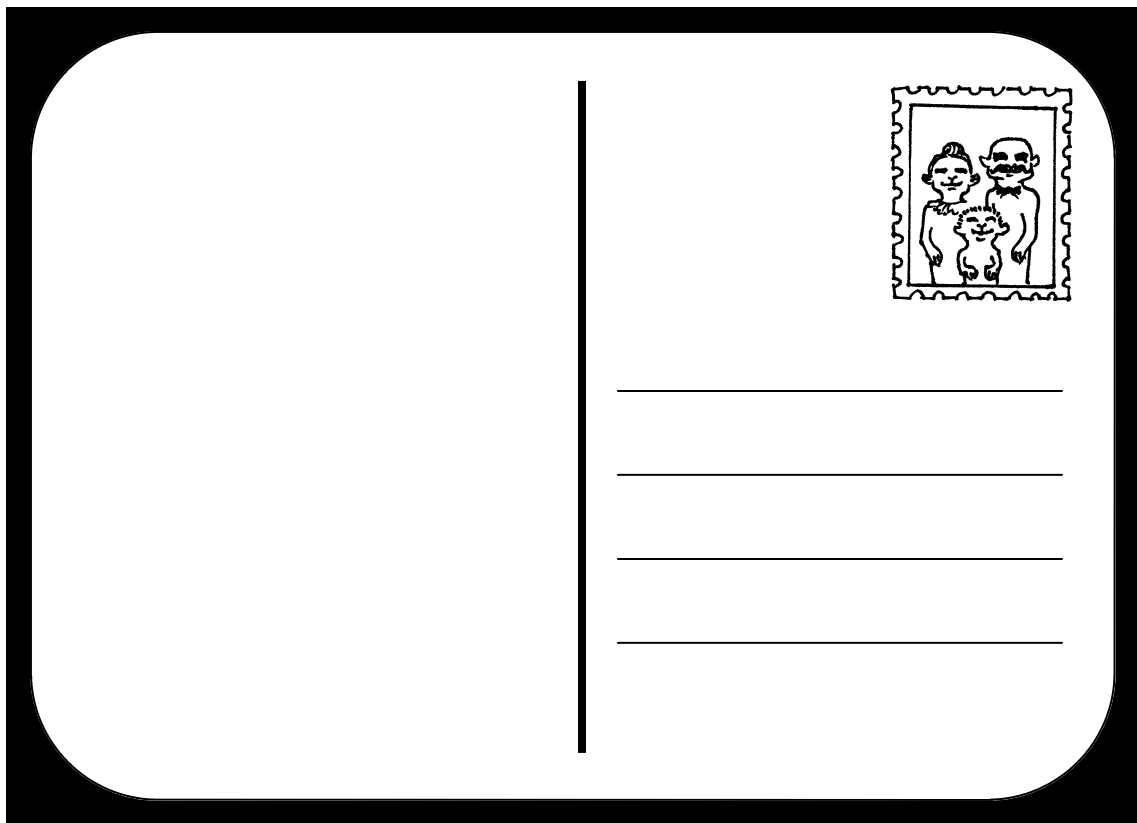
Cut book out on solid lines; fold on dotted lines. Cut out "The Mob" piece and paste to the tab on the file folder. Fill file folder with information your student learns from "Meet the Family" or with other information she learns about groups of meerkats.

Cut book out as one piece. Fold in half. Open. Fold bottom strip up (fold on the dotted lines) to form a pocket on the inside of the book. Use small dots of glue on the edges (if you use too much, the pockets will be too small).

Postcards Home



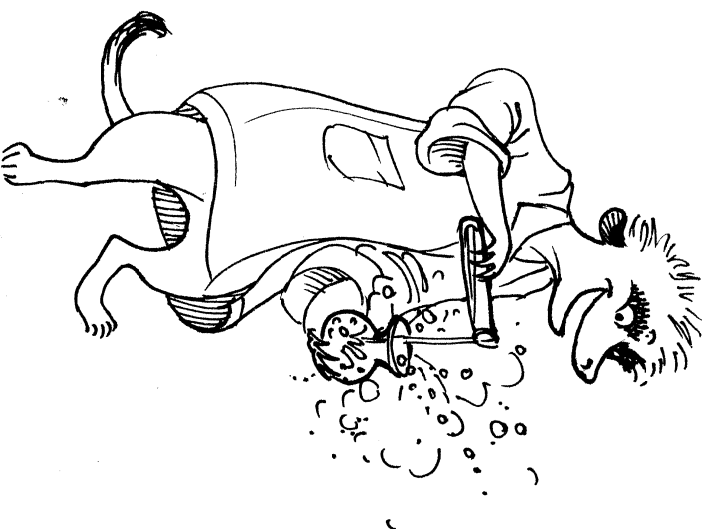




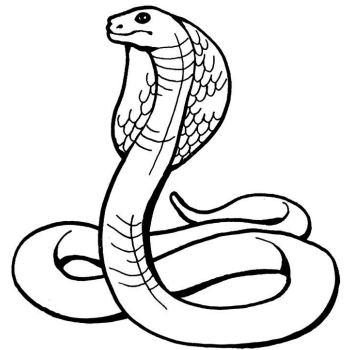
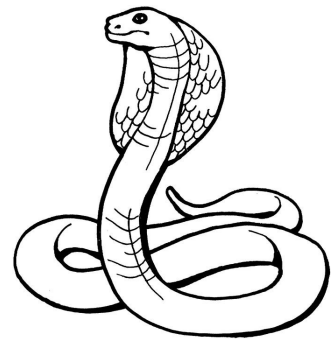
Cut out postcards. Pretend you are Sunny and write some more postcards home.
Store postcards in pocketbook.

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Cut out book as one piece. Fold left side in. Fold right side in. Open book.
Cut on dotted lines to form five flaps. Refold book.

Class		Scientific Classification 
Order		
Family		
Genus		
Species		

Cut book out as one piece. Fold in half. Paste pictures or write menu inside book (other pictures found in predators file).



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SIZE



EYES



CLAWS



TAIL



**WHAT MAKES
ME A MEEKAT?**



Cut out the animals. Separate them in to two stacks — predators and prey. Glue the predators in to the book on this page. Glue the others (including eggs) inside the Meerkat Menu book.