

Meerkat Mail

Unit Study



Meerkat Mail Unit Study

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Bible

Contentment

Sunny started off being very discontent with his situation, to the extent that he decided to leave home. Paul talks about learning to be content with what we have. (Philippians 4:11-12) Discuss with your child what that means.

Other references:

1 Timothy 6:8

Hebrews 3:5

Being Afraid

Sunny was afraid of the dark. He also felt a bit lonely. Discuss those feelings with your child. You may want to memorize Psalm 4:8.

The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-31

The welcome home by his family at the end reminds us of the Prodigal Son coming home. Share the story with your child of the Prodigal Son and how that speaks of God's love for us.

Social Studies

Geography- Kalahari Desert

After reading the story once, what does your student already know about the Kalahari Desert? (It is VERY dry and VERY hot.) Can your student guess where this desert is found?

The Kalahari Desert is a large arid to semi-arid sandy area in the Southern part of Africa. It covers much of Botswana, and parts of Namibia and South Africa. It is not

considered a true desert because it does receive some rainfall each year (usually 3-10 inches; you may want to compare this rainfall with the amount you get each year).

Geography- Landform: Dunes

Sunny's first postcard home is addressed to:

The Big Meerkat Mob

Sandy Burrow

The Dunes

Kalahari Desert

Under the Big Blue Sky

What are dunes? A dune is a hill or a ridge made of sand. They are shaped by the wind, and change all the time.

Geography- Marsh

Great Aunt-Flo lives in a marsh. Would your student like to live in a marsh? A marsh is a type of freshwater or saltwater wetland that is found along rivers, ponds, lakes, and coasts. Many scientists believe freshwater marshes are the most productive ecosystems on Earth; they provide food, water, and shelter, and act as nurseries for young fish, birds, insects, amphibians, and so on.

Use the background page to create your own marsh. Add plants and animals and color it.

Map Making (Creative Project)

If you would like to, make a map of Sonny's journey as he visited all his relatives.

My Family

Look at all those family photos (on the inside flap of the book)! Gather up as many family pictures as you can find and let your student make a photo album of his family (this could be in a small book, in his notebook, or for his lapbook). Let him label each picture with the right name(s), dates, and even captions, if desired. Discuss why it is important to label your photos.

You could also make a family tree with your child. Include extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins). Add photos if possible.

Language Arts

Postcards

Activity Ideas

1. Design a postcard depicting of your area and send it to a family or friend.
2. Look at postcards depicting your area where you live and discuss things that make your area unique. Send a postcard to a friend or family member telling them something about where you live.
3. Learn more about another area or country that your student is interested in and design a postcard from that country.
4. Ask friends and family members to mail postcards to your student.

Use the postcards provided to make your own!

Listmaking

If you look closely at the first note Sunny writes his family, you will see that he has a list of things to pack and has crossed off each one. What was on Sunny's list? (toothbrush, bucket, toothpaste, stamps) Make a list of things you think would be important if you were going to make a trip.

Vocabulary

Solitary- living habitually alone or in pairs

Nocturnal- active at night

Diurnal- active by day

Nomadic-like a nomad, with no fixed residence, roams

Vigilant- keenly watchful to detect danger

Family Motto

What was the family motto? ("Stay safe, stay together")

What is a motto? A short expression of a guiding rule of conduct.

Think of a motto that would best describe your family. Use the page provided to design a poster that includes and illustrates your family motto.

Humor in Writing

Read the newspaper article on the front inside flap. What's funny about it? Does your student realize the reporter's name, Liz Ard, is really a play on the word *lizard*? What about Uncle Bob's family motto? And, did you notice the way Sunny signed the postcard from Mildred and Frank's? Be sure to read the story each day, it's important that your student has a chance to pick up on the fun details that this author has given to us. (Also see Art - Humor in Art)

Creative Writing

Your older student may want to try something new-- write a story using letters or postcards! He could have a single character writing home (like Sunny) or he could choose two characters to correspond.

Art

Details

In many children's books, the illustrations tell more than the story. From the time Sunny goes against the family motto and leaves home, he is stalked by a jackal. But the story doesn't mention that--it's only in the illustrations. Sometimes you really have to look closely to see him--kids will love looking for him!

Humor in Art

Again, by looking for the details in these illustrations, you will not only find more to the story, you will find something funny! Did your student notice the egg on the postcard from the farm? The termite bites out of the postcard from Scratch and Mitch's? Humor can even be found on the back inside cover (Mildred...or Frank?). Spend some time looking for the funny details and have fun laughing together.

Math

Calendar Skills: Days of the Week

Teach the days of the week to your student. Make a list of where Sunny was on each day of the week.

Science

Meerkats

Please see [Homeschool Share's Meerkat Animal Study & Lapbook](#)

Other African Animals

Many other animals are mentioned or illustrated throughout the story. Let your student choose an animal to learn more about. You could also spend time learning about African animals that weren't mentioned in the book.

Jackal

Based on the pictures in the story, can your student identify what group of animals the jackal belongs to? The jackal is a mammal in the dog family. Jackals can be found in Africa and southwestern Asia. There are three different species of jackal: Golden jackal, Side-striped jackal, and Black-backed jackal. The jackal in our story is probably a Black-backed jackal.

The Black-backed jackal has silver-black fur running from the back of its neck to the base of its tail. The underside is white, and the rest of the body varies from reddish brown to ginger. It has very large pointed ears and is slenderer than the other species. Black-backed jackals usually live in pairs. In order to catch larger prey, they hunt in packs. They are nocturnal predators who hunt for hares, rodents, gazelles, snakes, lizards, and many other small animals. Black-backed jackals are omnivorous (plant and meat eating); they also eat fruits and berries.

Red-billed Hornbill

Hornbills are characterized by their long, down-curved bills. As you probably guessed, the Red Hornbill's bill is red and other hornbills often have brightly colored bills. Hornbills live throughout Africa and are omnivorous meaning they eat meat (insects and small animals) as well as vegetables (fruit). They can't swallow food, so they toss it back in their throats with a jerk of their heads.

The Red-billed Hornbill is white on its head and underside and grey on its upperparts. It has a long tail and long bill. It specifically eats fruit and insects. It has a unique tok-tok-tok-toktok call.

The Red-billed Hornbills live in holes in trees; they block the holes with a mud, dropping, and fruit pulp mix. The female lays three to six white eggs in the nest; she stays in the tree while the father brings her food. The hole in the tree is just large enough for the father to get food to the mother. When the chicks are too large to fit in the nest, the mother breaks out and rebuilds.

Termites

Termites are social insects who build nests in large trees, in soil, and even underground to house their colonies. Using their saw-toothed jaws, termites eat 24 hours a day, seven days a week! They feast on lumber, wallpaper, plastics, and fabric. They are known as pests because they cause a lot of damage each year to homes and other buildings.

There are four types of termites: dampwood, drywood, underground, and mound builders. Your student may want to investigate the different types or check out some books on termites to learn even more.

Melting

Sunny's ice-cream is melting because it is so hot. Discuss the concept of melting with your student-- to change from a solid to a liquid state usually through heat. Introduce the terms solid and liquid and give examples of both. Give your young student a block of chocolate or some ice cubes and ask them to put it in a bowl in the sun. Ask them what they think will happen. Will they change forms? Which one will melt first?

For an older student, you may want to try the following science activity:

Supplies Needed

ice cubes

a pot of boiling water

a facet of running water

Instructions

Ask your student which one will melt first--

1. An ice cube in a boiling pot of water

or

2. An ice cube under running cold water

Heat the water on the stove to boiling. Turn on the cold water facet in your sink.

Select two same-sized ice cubes. Put one in the pot and hold the other in your hand under the running water. Observe which one melts first. Is your student surprised? How could cold water melt an ice cube faster than boiling water? Ice melts as heat moves inward from the surrounding area. The greater the difference between the temperatures of the ice and its surroundings, the faster the heat will move inwards. So why didn't the ice in the boiling water melt first?

When you first put the ice into the hot water, heat moved quickly in from the surrounding water, causing the ice to melt. That left it surrounded by a layer of cold water from the freshly melted ice and water that had given up a lot of its heat as the ice melted. This layer of cool water insulated the ice, slowing the melting process.

Even though the running water was cool, it was still quite a bit warmer than the ice. It was flowing, so any melted ice was quickly carried away, and the insulating layer of cold water did not form. The flowing water provided a constant supply of heat to continue the melting process, so it melted the ice much faster.

Sun Safety

When it is hot, what are some things we need to remember? Drink liquids, put on sunscreen, stay in the shade if possible, and wear a hat. Can your student think of some ways to keep cool?

Just for fun

Make fruit popsicles with fruit juice (or yogurt) to enjoy on a hot day. Go out for ice cream at the end of the unit.

Art Activity

Mix a few drops of food coloring with water and freeze them in ice-cube trays, adding craft sticks for handles. Paint a picture with the melting cubes.

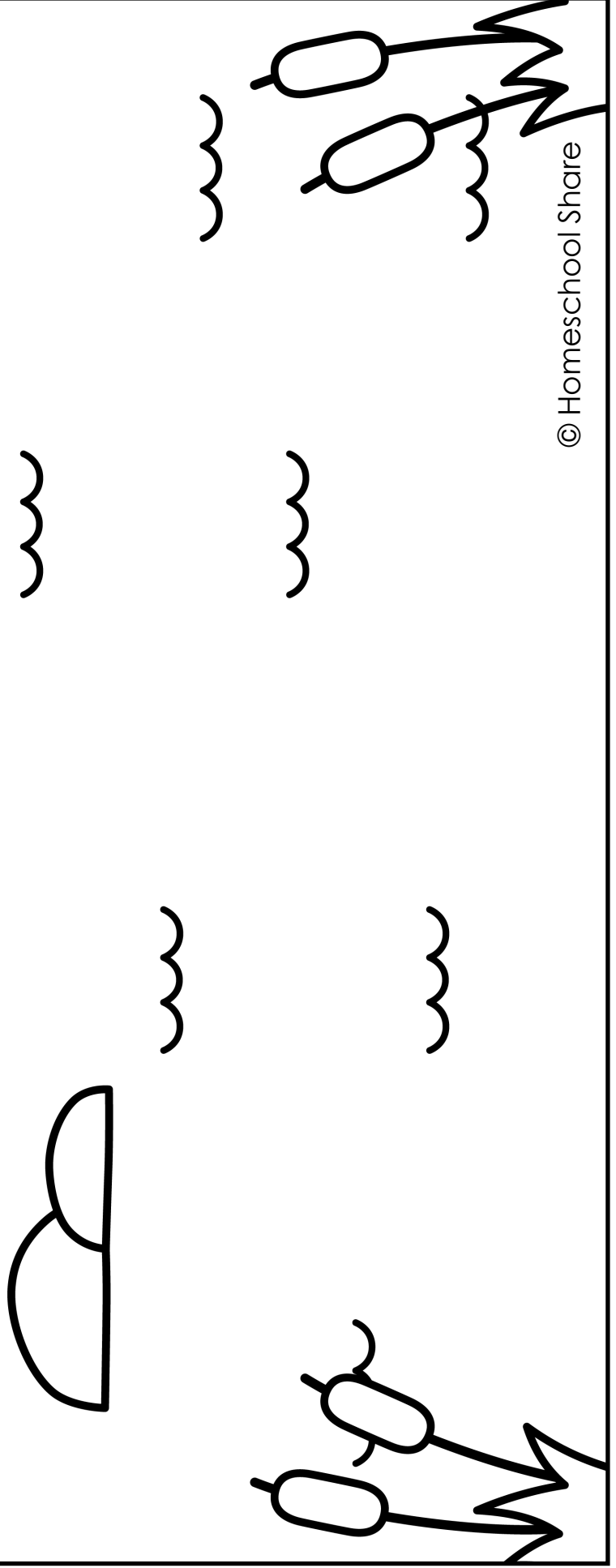
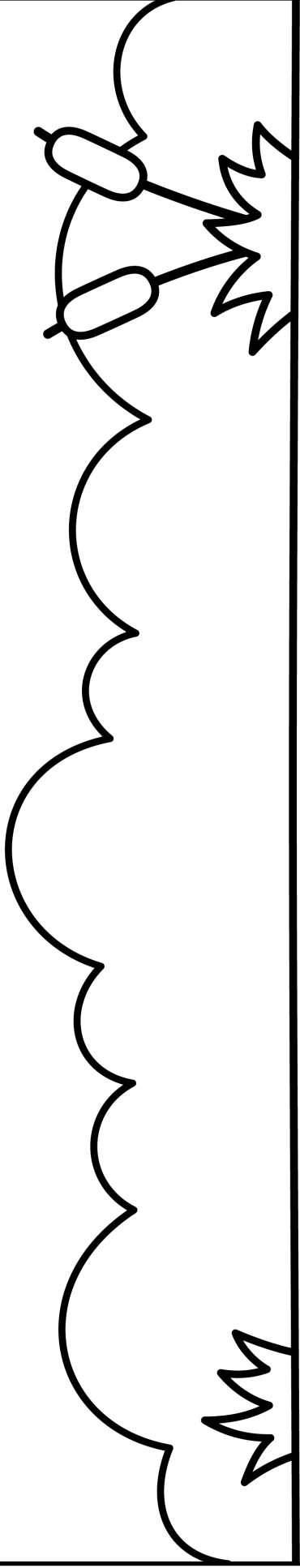
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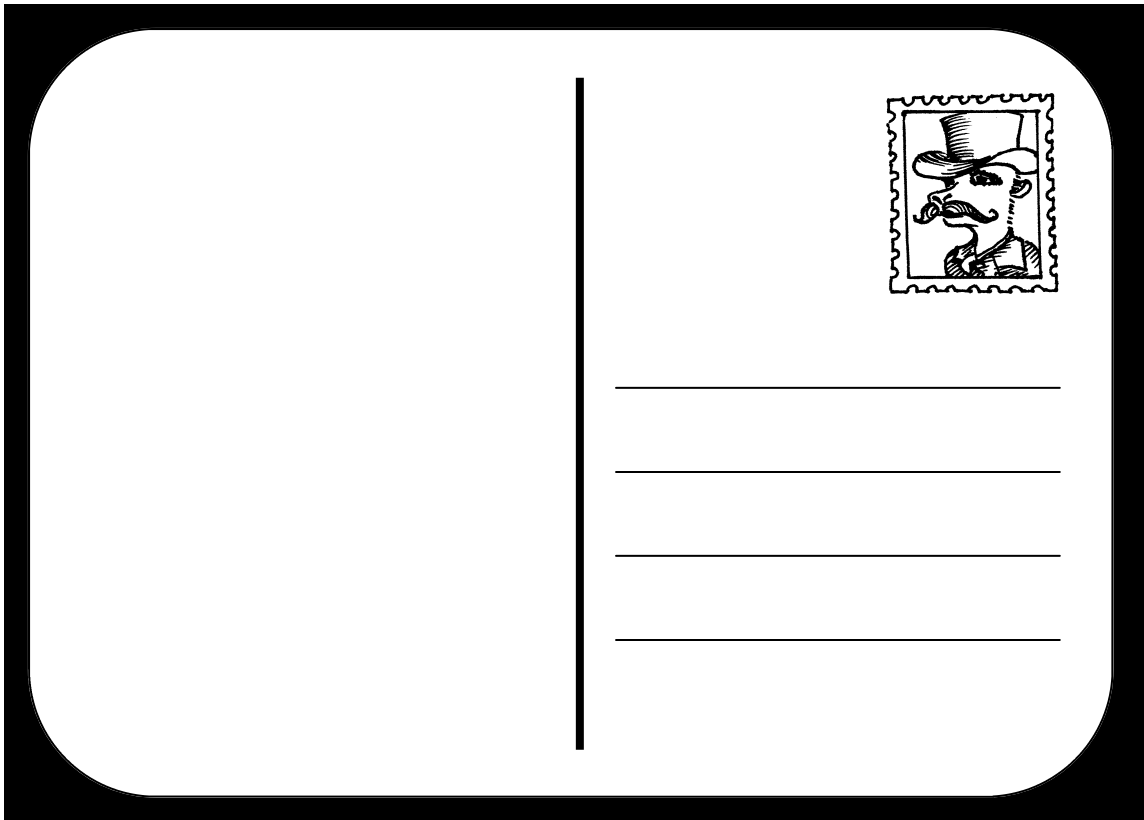
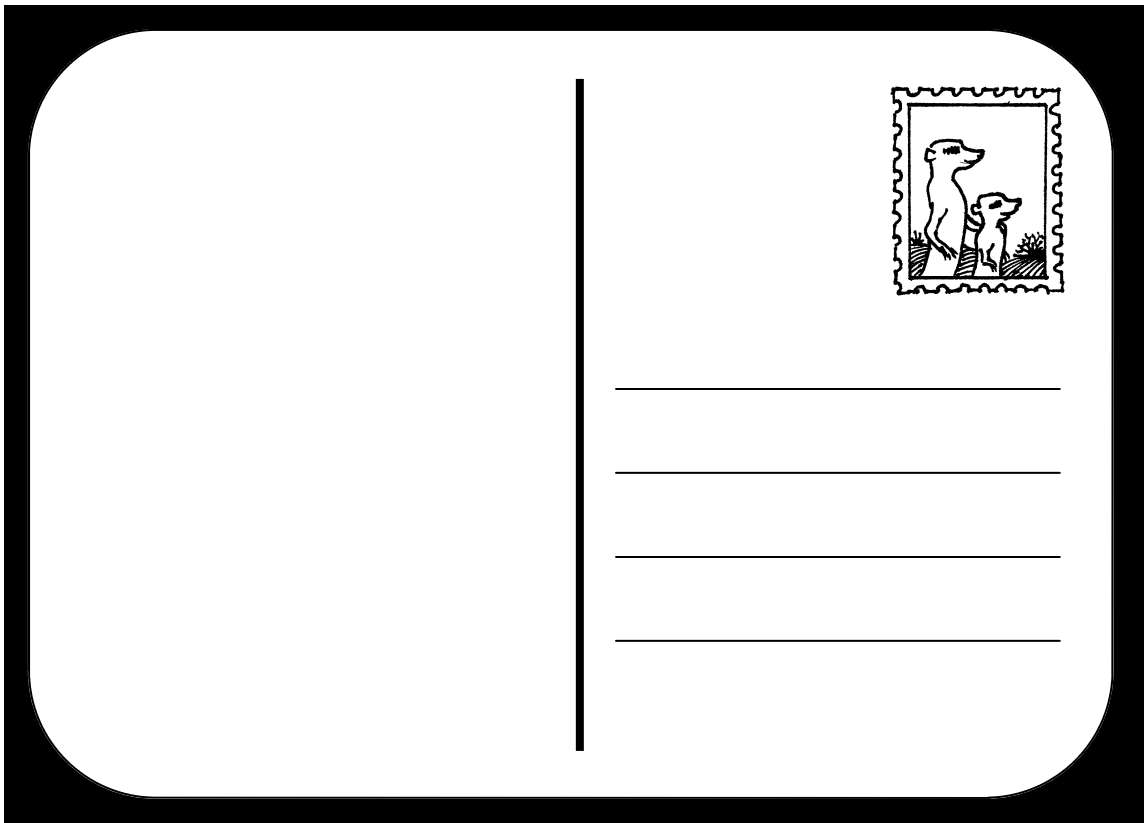
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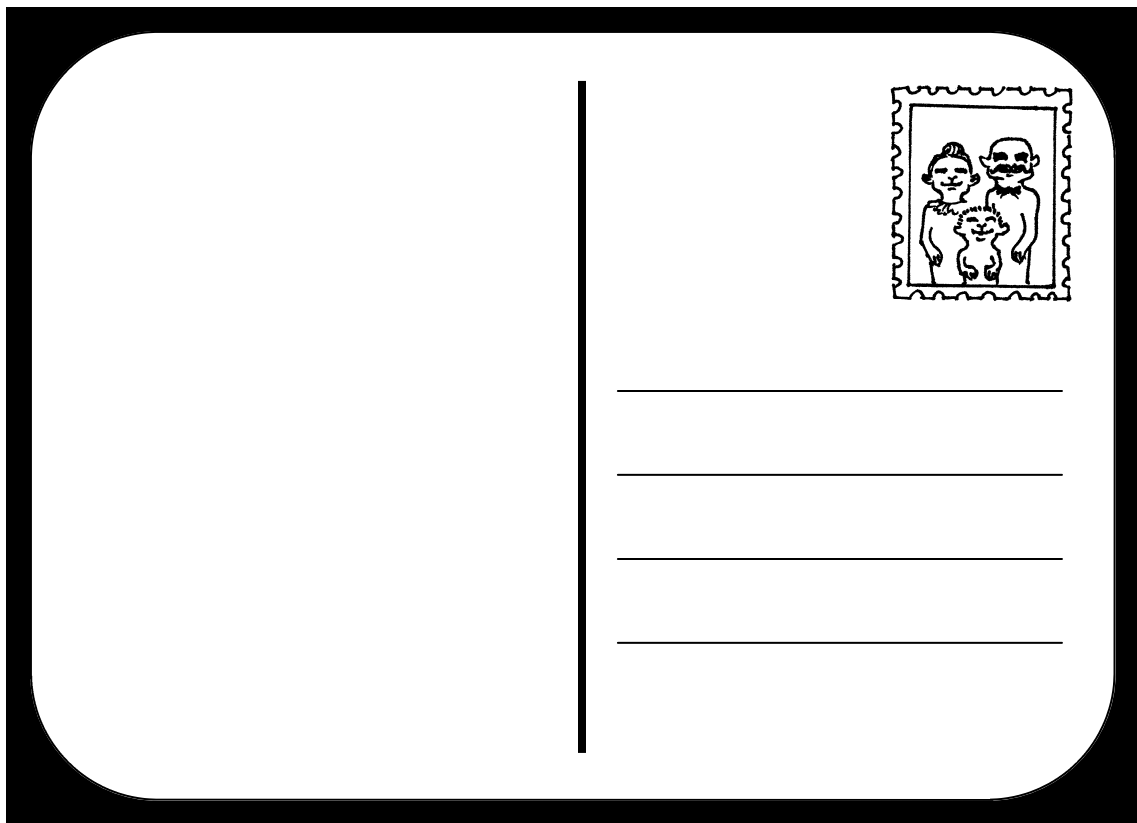
MY FAMILY MOTTO

MARSH

a type of freshwater or saltwater wetland that is found along rivers, ponds, lakes, and coasts







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

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