



Taiga Review—Interactive Reading Lesson

Note: The goal of this activity is to review the characteristics of the taiga. It is all about the PROCESS, not the end PRODUCT. It is important to read the information and follow the step-by-step instructions in order to commit to memory the things that make a taiga, a taiga. A picture sample is provided at the end of the lesson to help with an idea on spacing, but PLEASE do not just copy the example without going through the reading points.

1. On page 75 of your field journal, we glued in a taiga title piece with some facts. This is the page that you will add to in order to remember the main characteristics of the taiga. **Read the other names that people use for this biome AND what the origin of the word means in Russian.**
2. The taiga is the largest LAND biome. The largest biome in the world is the ocean, but the taiga is the largest land biome, with the largest taiga ecosystem being located in Russia/Siberia. **Put a box around the words "LARGEST land biome" and "the largest—Russia/Siberia."**
3. The taiga biome is located in the topmost section of the northern temperate zone, between the northern temperate forests and the Arctic tundra. **Underline the word "between" twice.**
4. You were given an envelope in class with cutouts to add to this page. **Locate the cutout that says "Southern Hemisphere" and glue it close to and underneath the swarm of mosquitoes surrounding the title piece.** See the sample for location. NOW, **cross out the word "southern."** This is to help you remember that the taiga is ONLY located in the Northern Hemisphere and NOT the Southern Hemisphere. The reason is because in the Southern Hemisphere, there are no land masses where a taiga climate zone could exist. You can't have a pine forest if there is no land for the trees to grow!
5. The climate in the taiga has little precipitation. Despite the low precipitation, the land in the taiga is very wet, marshy, and snowy with countless rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, and waterfalls. What precipitation it does have does not easily evaporate because of the cold temperatures AND the frozen ground prevents water from draining. Many lake beds were carved out by glaciers from years ago. **Using the sample as an approximate guide for placement, draw a small waterfall and lake with a light blue colored pencil.** Using crayon may prevent you from writing over the water and glued on pieces from sticking.
6. You will find many animals enjoying the water wonderland of the taiga. Salmon migrate here from the ocean to spawn (lay their eggs) and then die afterwards, providing food for many animals. That is, if the bears awaiting their migrating mission do not catch them first! Beavers are engineering masterminds and thrive in the taiga. They are a keystone species because of their dam-building skills providing other taiga animals with food and shelter sources. **Find the cutouts of the beaver and the bear eating a salmon and glue them onto your drawing of the lake and waterfall.**
7. A magical display of dancing and colorful lights can be seen in the taiga. The aurora borealis, or Northern Lights, is a natural phenomenon of tiny particles from the sun interacting with the earth's atmosphere. You will learn more about the auroras in our study of the tundra. **Using the sample as a guide for placement and colored pencils, create your own Northern Lights display as a background. Write "Northern Lights" off to the side in small letters.**

8. The taiga has very short summers, lasting a mere 50 to 100 days. When the short summers do arrive, so do LARGE SWARMS of insects, especially the pesky mosquito! While the mammals find them very irritating, the mosquito feast is a welcome sight for many birds, making them a questionable keystone species. **Write these words near the mosquito picture, "short summers = large insect swarms".** Note that this is different wording than what is on the sample.
9. With such short summers, that leaves the taiga in a blanket of snow with freezing temperatures for the majority of the year. **Write "cold and snowy" in small letters off to the side and add two strips of glitter paper at the bottom of the page and towards the middle to represent the snow.** See sample for approximate placement.
10. The taiga is a forest, thick with coniferous trees of pine, spruce, and fir. Coniferous trees are especially adapted to the cold, harsh climate. Their triangle shape and dark-green, needle-like leaves helps them to capture as much sunlight as possible in the dense forest, as well as prevents the heavy snow from piling on and breaking its branches. Conifers get their name due to the fact they produce cones to protect and spread their seeds. They also do not lose their leaves, staying "evergreen," which is another name for these trees. **Add the three tree stickers from your envelope to remind you of the three types of conifers found in the taiga...pine, spruce, and fir.** See the example for placement.
11. The taiga is very large and at first glance might seem empty, but it is full of interesting wildlife! The moose is the second largest land mammal in North America, weighing up to 1,500 pounds and standing as tall as 7-feet to the shoulder! Yet, despite their large size, they are graceful swimmers and can run fast through the snow! In fact, moose are so fast that a human can NOT outrun a moose with their speeds reaching up to 35 miles per hour! **Add the cutout of the moose to the snow-covered ground at the bottom of the page.**
12. Animals of the taiga are specially adapted to the snow and cold temperatures. The snowshoe hare has many adaptations to survive and thrive in the taiga. One special one that helps them to avoid predators is the ability to change their fur color to match the environment. During the short summer, their hair turns brown, but in the winter, it turns white to blend in with the snow. **Add the snowshoe hare cutout to the bottom of the page.**
13. What is the difference between a caribou and a reindeer? Location and upbringing! They are basically one in the same, but can both be found in the taiga biome. In Europe they are called reindeer. In North America they are called caribou if they are wild, and reindeer if they are domesticated. **Add the reindeer/caribou cutout to the middle of the page as if it's walking through the forest.**
14. The taiga is home to large populations of birds, both small and large, such as the snowy owl and great grey owl with wingspans up to four feet. They are expert hunters and are able to locate their prey even hidden beneath the snow. However, they are not the only flying creatures of the taiga! Flying squirrels can also be found "flying" from tree to tree. They don't actually fly. The large membrane between their front and back legs allows them to glide around the forest. Their bodies are miniature hang gliders! **Add the owl and flying squirrel cutouts where you are able to find room.**
15. **To finish your page, add snowflakes by either drawing them in or gluing in the ones provided if you have room. You may also add labels to identify the animals if you have room.**

(PICTURE SAMPLE BELOW)

Taiga Biome



Otherwise known as: Coniferous Forest, Boreal Forest, Snow Forest

- In Russian, taiga means "marshy pine forest" or "land of little sticks"
- The world's **LARGEST** land biome

- Located in the upper temperate zone, between the temperate forests and tundra
- Areas include: Alaska, Canada, Scandinavia, China, and **the largest—Russia/Siberia**

Cold and Snowy

Northern Lights



With the very short summers come swarms of mosquitoes

~~Southern Hemisphere~~

Evergreen Trees

reindeer/
Caribou



Moose

Brown Bears



salmon



Beaver

snowshoe hare

