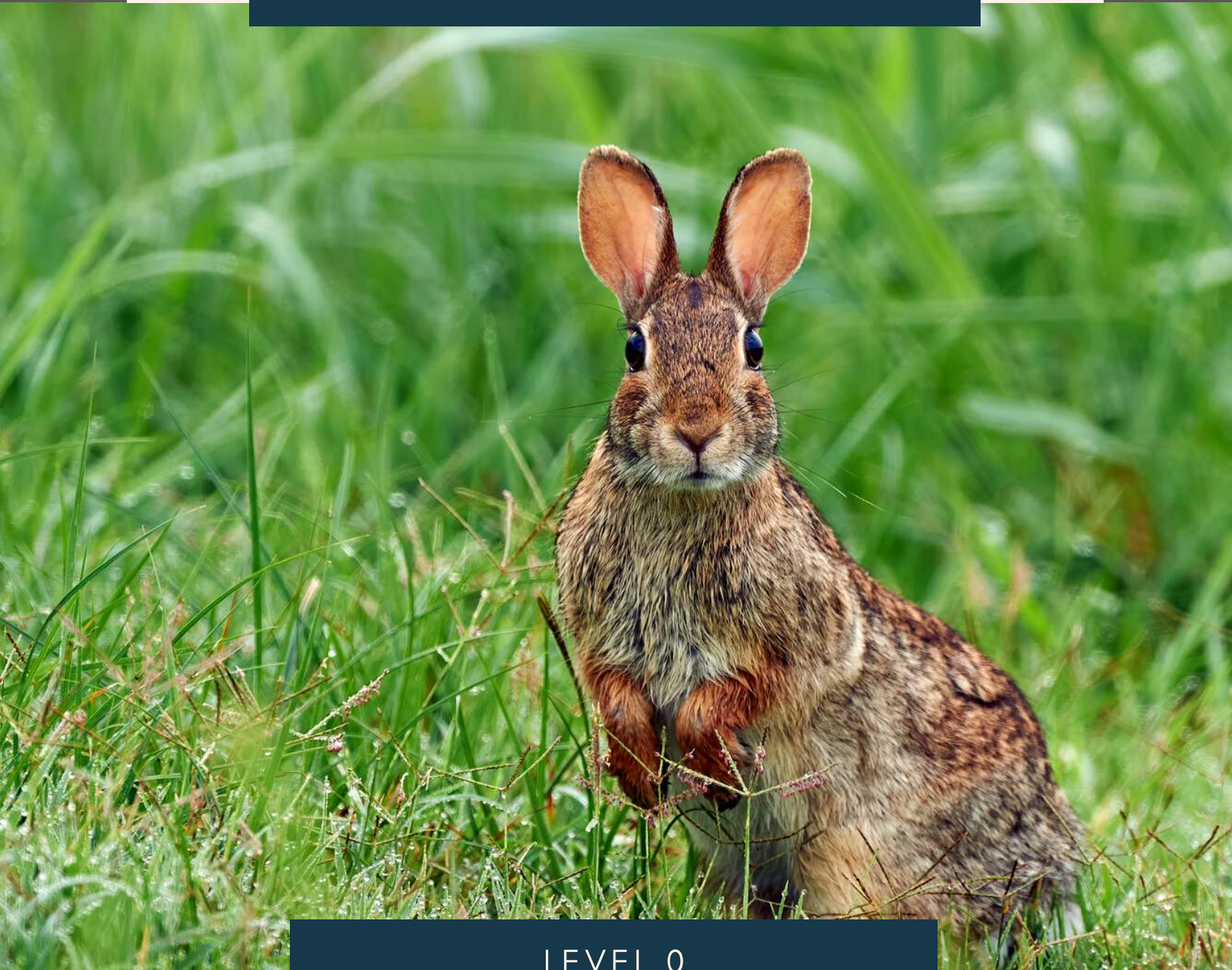


BLOSSOM & ROOT

EARLY ELEMENTARY NATURE STUDY // LEVEL 0

My Outdoor Classroom

PARENT GUIDE



LEVEL 0

Exploring Animals, Seeds, and Eggs

Blossom & Root

Early Elementary Nature Study,
Level 0

My Outdoor Classroom

A Hands-On, Secular Nature Study Curriculum

For Kindergarten and Early Elementary Learners

**Blossom & Root Early Elementary Nature Study
Level 0: My Outdoor Classroom**

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Welcome to Your Outdoor Classroom!

A Relaxed, Hands-On, Literature-Inspired Approach to
Nature Study in the Early Grades



Options for Scheduling This Curriculum:

What Will a Week of Nature Study Look Like?

For a traditional approach, aim to complete one lesson per week for a 36-week school year. Here is an example of a schedule for this curriculum:

- **Days 1 - 3:** Spend five to fifteen minutes reading this week's Nature Lore chapter out loud, until you finish it. You can also spend this time watching the recommended videos and reading some of the recommended supplemental books for each lesson.
- **Day 4:** Spend fifteen minutes doing this week's Nature Study activity outside. Of course, if your child is enjoying the activity, feel free to extend it.
- **Day 5:** Spend ten minutes completing this week's Nature Notebook entry.

Alternatively, you could spend Days 1 - 4 doing all other homeschool subjects and dedicate the whole of day 5 to Nature Study, beginning with reading the Nature Lore, followed by the Nature Study activity, and finishing with the Notebook entry. This is a great option if you enjoy lots of hikes and field trips to national and state parks and forests. You can even condense this curriculum into two shorter, seasonal unit studies.

How to Plan Out Each Unit (the Simple Way):

A few weeks before you begin a lesson, look over it and decide which books or video links you'd like to use and which activities you'd like to do. Highlight them in the teacher's guide here or write them into a separate planner. Refer to the lessons for some basic supplies you'll need to gather.

Always feel free to add more activities, books, videos, field trips, etc. beyond the suggestions in this guide!

Exploring Your Outdoor Classroom



Image: Royalty-free stock photo ID: 1833537019

This curriculum integrates weekly nature lore selections with hands-on activities to bring your classroom outdoors. This curriculum will allow you the opportunity to explore many nature study themes together, including:

- animal families
- animal adaptations for hunting and finding food
- animal adaptations for avoiding predators
- animal communication
- how animals prepare for winter
- beavers and dams
- nocturnal animals
- food webs
- tracks and scat
- ground-dwelling animals
- hares and rabbits
- squirrels and chipmunks
- porcupines and skunks
- badgers, weasels, and wolverines
- canids and cats
- bears and raccoons
- deer, elk, moose, and caribou
- big horn sheep
- trees
- seeds and seedlings
- how plants grow
- measurement
- vegetables and fruits
- parts of a flower
- garden helpers
- eggs, and animals that lay eggs
- the life cycle of a frog
- and more!

This curriculum is designed to provide support and inspiration to the parent educator. Above all else, please make it yours!

Inspire, Explore, Discover, & Record

In this curriculum, we will take a "three step" approach to Nature Study:

Step One: Inspire with Nature Lore

You will be reading a chapter each week (sometimes two) from *The Burgess Animal Book for Children* by Thornton Burgess or from *Seed Babies* by Margaret Warner Morley. In place of a textbook, we are reading from these wonderful living books to inspire curiosity in your child. The idea is that, when they go outside after listening to these wonderful stories, they will have their eyes and ears open for discovery. You may wish to read each chapter over one-to-three short sessions before moving on to nature study and the notebook entry. Please note that this parent guide includes additional books and video suggestions for *most* weeks. Please also note that this curriculum *does not* use or cover every chapter in the Burgess selection. However, you are welcome to include the chapters we've omitted, and use them to explore even more nature topics!

Step Two: Explore and Discover with Nature Study

After reading the nature lore entry for the week, it's time for nature study! Nature study includes short explorations, activities, games, dramatic play prompts, or experiments to do outdoors with your child. If you live where weather can be extreme during certain times of the year, most can be modified to be done indoors if necessary. They usually take around 10 or 15 minutes to complete, though some can last an entire day if you would like them to!

Step Three: Record with the Nature Notebook

The final step in our nature study curriculum is for your child to record their discoveries in their Nature Notebook. This notebook is a separate PDF from this parent guide, and was included with your purchase. We suggest that you print out a copy of the Nature Notebook for each child, in its entirety. You can either bind it, or print out one page for your child to do at a time. At the end of the year, you can put them into a three-ring binder or have them spiral-bound. Sometimes there are two (or even three) entries per week, but these should only take five to fifteen minutes, no matter what.

We highly recommend that you assist your child with their notebook entries, writing their words for them. This way, they can focus on processing ideas rather than mechanics and handwriting at this early stage. This is, of course, up to you, your child's abilities, and your goals. Your child may wish to draw or illustrate in their journals. If your child does not enjoy drawing, they may wish to find images to print or photocopy from books or online, or they may like to take photographs. They may tape or glue these images into their notebooks. Please feel free to adapt the parameters and expectations of the notebook to suit your child and their individual needs. Remember--the goal of the notebook is to record what they've observed or learned during nature study.



"What should I do if the nature lore selections aren't a good fit for my child?"

Our nature lore selections may not be a fit for every family. If you've given them a try, and they are just not working for your child, please feel free to drop them and just use the suggested books and videos to explore each week's topics instead. Most families will prefer a mix of *both* the nature lore selections and the supplemental books and videos.

Resources to Support Your Adventures

In this second edition, we have provided a number of resources, in addition to the lessons. You are not required to use any of these. Please do not allow these lists to be a source of stress for you. Please pick and choose the resources that work for you, according to time, interest, and availability.

Spines and Supplemental Books

We have included recommended pages from a few spines, as well as supplemental book suggestions, for many weeks in this curriculum. (A spine is a book that is used for several lessons throughout the year.) Please feel free to seek additional selections from your library, based on availability of books and resources.

Suggested Video Links

We have included suggested video links for many weeks in this curriculum. Clickable links can be found in the very back of this parent guide. Please always **screen links first** before showing them to your child, and please report any broken or compromised links to us right away. Please feel free to seek additional videos or documentaries online to supplement your learning.

Colorful Photographs PDF

We have included a separate PDF full of colorful photographs to show your child for most (but not all) of weeks 1 – 25 in this curriculum. If you wish to use this as a visual aid as you read through the nature lore and explore each topic in the curriculum, you may either print the PDF out or use it digitally on your phone, computer, or tablet. Use of this PDF is completely optional.

This PDF was included with your purchase of this curriculum. We have kept it separate from the student notebook and the parent guide so that parents may print them out in color easily, and apart from the black and white notebook and parent guide.

This PDF is subject to the same copyright protections as the teacher's guide and student notebook. You may not share or sell this PDF with / to anyone else.

Contents

Week / Lesson

Week 1: Exploring Our Outdoor Classroom

Week 2: Prey Adaptations, Hares vs. Rabbits

Week 3: Prey Hiding Places, Animal Profile No. 1 (Hares)

Week. 4: Animal Families Where I Live

Week 5: Tree Observation and Log No. 1

Week 6: Ground-Dwelling Animals

Week 7: Animal Profile No. 2 (Squirrels, Chipmunks, or Chucks)

Week 8: Animal Sound-Signals

Week 9: Preparing for Winter

Week / Lesson

Week 10: Predators; Animal Profile No. 3 (Porcupines or Gophers)

Week 11: Beavers and Dams

Week 12: A Night Walk

Week 13: Animal Profile No. 4 (Skunks)

Week 14: Sunbathing, Animal Profile No. 5 (Badgers or Wolverines)

Week 15: Predator Adaptations, Animal Profile No. 6 (Weasels or Otters)

Week 16: Food Webs

Week 17: Canids; Canid Tracks and Scat; Animal Profile No. 7 (Coyotes, Foxes, or Wolves)

Week 18: Cats, Animal Profile No. 8 (Lynx), Tree Observation and Log No. 2

Contents

Week / Lesson

Week 19: Cat Tracks and Scat

Week 20: Bear and Raccoon
Tracks and Scat

Week 21: Checking the Track-
Trap

Week 22: Animal Profile No. 9
(Bears)

Week 23: Deer Tracks and Scat

Week 24: Animal Profile No. 10
(Elk, Moose, or Caribou)

Week 25: Animal Profile No. 11
(Big Horn Sheep, Bison, or Musk
Ox)

Week 26: Tree Observation and
Log No. 3, Plant a Seed, Seed
Log No. 1

Week 27: Seed Hunt, Seed Log
No. 2

Week / Lesson

Week 28: Vegetables, Seed Log
No. 3

Week 29: What a Seed Needs,
Seed Log No. 4

Week 30: Fruits, Seed Log No. 5

Week 31: Parts of a Flower,
Seed Log No. 6

Week 32: Garden Helpers and
Pollination, Seed Log No. 7

Week 33: Ponds, Life Cycle of a
Frog, Seed Log No. 8

Week 34: Eggs and the Animals
that Lay Them, Seed Log No. 9

Week 35: Tree Observation and
Log No. 4, Eggs Hatching, Seed
Log No. 10

Week 36: Special Field Trip
(Child's Choice)

Book List: Nature Lore

The two nature lore selections that are used throughout the year are listed below. Please note that the Burgess selection is available for **free** in PDF format from Project Gutenberg (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2441>) and in audio format from Librivox (<https://librivox.org/the-burgess-animal-book-for-children-by-thornton-w-burgess/>.) *Seed Babies* is available for **free** in PDF format from the Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn3ja6&view=lup&seq=10>) and in audio format from Librivox (<https://librivox.org/seed-babies-by-margaret-warner-morley/>.) These links are included in the clickable links at the back of this guide.

- ***The Burgess Animal Book for Children* by Thornton W. Burgess**
- ***Seed Babies* by Margaret W. Morley**

A note on language: Some of the language used in the above selections is a bit dated, and will not be appropriate for every family. Please always screen ahead before reading out loud to your child, and adapt as needed before sharing with your child.

Book List: Supplemental

The following list contains all of the books that can be found in the sections called "Optional Pages from the Spines*" and "Optional Supplemental Books" in each lesson. **These books are NOT required, and it is not necessary for you to provide all of them if you are trying to take a literature-based approach for your child.** Ideally, you will combine interest, available resources at your local library, budget, etc. to choose the titles for each unit that you would like to include. To locate specific units that each book applies to, please refer to "Optional Pages from the Spines*" and "Optional Supplemental Books" in each lesson. Many books are recommended for more than one unit, so be sure to review the full list below when choosing your books, especially if you're using the library.

Spines (Completely Optional):

Several Weeks: The following books could be used over several weeks of the curriculum.

- DK's *An Anthology of Intriguing Animals* (could be used several times during Weeks 1 - 25)
- DK Smithsonian *The Animal Book* (could be used several times during Weeks 1 - 25)
- DK Smithsonian *Animal!* (could be used several times during Weeks 1 - 25)
- DK Smithsonian *Trees, Leaves, Flowers, and Seeds* (could be used several times during Weeks 26 - 36)
- *Nature Anatomy: The Curious Parts and Pieces of the Natural World* by Julia Rothman (used for many weeks 2 - 33, but these are mostly simple illustrations with little tidbits of information, so you'll find pages in the supplemental section of any relevant lesson, rather than in the spines)

Please note that the three animal spines* are not used as frequently during weeks 1 - 11. Their usage is a bit sporadic during those first lessons on rabbits, hares, and rodents. Please also note that all of these spines* could be used in later years of Blossom and Root science curriculum. The three animal spines could be used for Level 3 science and the plant spine could be used for Level 2 science.

*A "spine" is a book that is used for several lessons during the year.

Supplies

Note: Please see activities for each week to determine which supplies you will need. You will need to pick and choose which activities you plan to do (and, therefore, which supplies you need.)

General, Used Throughout the Year:

- An outdoor area (or many!) where you can explore during the year: parks, fields, woods, ponds, green belts, trails, state or national parks, etc.
- Writing / drawing supplies (pencils, crayons, markers, etc.)
- Camera or camera phone and a way to print out photos (optional)
- Field guides for your local area and / or internet access to look up plants, animals, tracks, scat, etc.
- Scrap paper
- A ruler or tape measure

Week 7: Various instruments (at least six) for digging: a fork, a large scoop or spoon, a hand-rake or cultivator from the garden shed, a paddle-shaped scrap of wood or plastic, a hook, etc.

Week 9: Blocks or toys from around your home

Week 11: Large plastic tub (optional), materials to build a dam (mud, sticks, etc.), water

Week 13: Dried beans, flour, or uncooked rice; candies in wrappers; forks

Week 17: Paint, paper

Week 20: Cooking pan or tray with sides, sand or dirt, cup of fruit (optional)

Week 22: Ingredients for “bear mix” (see lesson for details)

Week 23: Scrap cardboard, tape or stapler and staples

Week 26: Cups or plant pots with drainage holes, potting soil, bean or pea seeds, a sunny window in your home, ruler or tape measure

Week 28: Various vegetables (stalks / stems, leaves, roots, flowers); tweezers; magnifying glass (optional)

Week 30: Various fruits (including those we normally call vegetables, like squash and cucumbers); tweezers; magnifying glass (optional)

Week 31: Flower seeds to soak (the larger the better—nasturtium, calendula, sunflower, etc.); water; shallow dish; tweezers

Week 34: Something egg-shaped (rock, plastic Easter egg, etc.)

Week 1: Exploring Our Outdoor Classroom

Nature Lore:

Read “Jenny Wren Gives Peter Rabbit an Idea” from *The Burgess Animal Book for Children*. (From now on, this will be abbreviated as BABC.)

Nature Study: Exploring Our Outdoor Classroom

Go outside with your child and explore the area that will be your “outdoor classroom” for the next year of Nature Study. This can be your backyard, a local field or forest, a park, or a series of National and State Parks and Forests. Choose a place that will be easy to visit most weeks. Let your child play freely, exploring their new classroom. Remind them that they will be visiting their “outdoor classroom” each week during nature study.

Nature Notebook: My Outdoor Classroom

Help your child to complete the notebook entry for week one by making a picture of the outdoor classroom they explored today. Label their picture for them, using their words, and date the entry.

Optional Lesson Enhancements and Support:

1. Optional Pages from the Spines:

- No recommended pages from the spines this week.

2. Optional Supplemental Books:

The following books were selected to kick off your year, set the tone for your outdoor classroom, and inspire your outdoor adventures together for the coming years! These selections could be enjoyed at anytime throughout this year.

- *The Hike* by Alison Farrell
- *Stand Like a Cedar* by Nicola I. Campbell
- *A Day with Yayah* by Nicola I. Campbell
- *Let's Go on a Hike* by Katrina Liu
- *Hiking Day* by Anne Rockwell
- *Hike* by Pete Oswald
- *Fatima's Great Outdoors* by Ambreen Tariq
- *The Camping Trip* by Jennifer K. Mann
- *Hurry Up!: A Book About Slowing Down* by Kate Dopirak
- *Dusk Explorers* by Lindsay Leslie
- *Jayden's Impossible Garden* by Mélina Mangal
- *You Are Never Alone* by Elin Kelsey
- *Tiny, Perfect Things* by M. H. Clark
- *Where's Rodney?* by Carmen Bogan

3. Optional Videos and Websites (clickable links in the back of this guide):

- No recommended videos for this first week.

4. From the Photographs PDF

- Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
- House Wren

Week 2: Prey Adaptations, Rabbits vs. Hares

Nature Lore:

Read "Peter & Jumper Go to School" from BABC.

Nature Study: Observing Prey Adaptations

This week, you will observe for prey adaptations in your outdoor classroom, as well as online or in field guides of your local area. Talk to your child about the words "predator" and "prey." Predators are animals that hunt other animals. Prey are animals that are hunted by other animals. Here are some examples you can give your child:

- Cat = predator; Mouse = prey
- Shark = predator; Guppy = prey
- Spider = predator; Fly = prey

Ask your child if they can think of some examples, too.

Now you will think, together, of prey animals in your area. What animals live around you, or near your outdoor classroom, that would be called "prey" animals? Make a little list on a scrap of paper. Talk about Peter and Jumper. They are prey animals. They have different ways of escaping from predators. What can some of the animals on your "prey" list do to hide or escape from predators, or defend themselves against a predator? See if you can find any of them outside, in a field guide of your local area, or on an internet search. (Example of search phrase: "Prey adaptations in Arizona")

Nature Notebook: Hares & Rabbits

Have your child complete the notebook entry for week two. They will compare what they learned about hares vs. rabbits in this week's nature lore, and also what you discussed during your talk about prey adaptations. You can help to remind them of what you learned, if they need it.

Optional Lesson Enhancements and Support:

1. Optional Pages from the Spines:

- DK's *An Anthology of Intriguing Animals*: page 134
- From *DK Smithsonian The Animal Book*: "Rabbits, hares, and pikas" (pages 228 - 229)
- From *DK Smithsonian Animal!*: pages 174 - 175

2. Optional Supplemental Books:

- *Nature Anatomy* by Julia Rothman: page 154
- You may wish to check your local library to see if they have books on rabbits / hares that you can borrow.

3. Optional Videos and Websites (clickable links in the back of this guide):

- From Nature on PBS, "Swimming Rabbits Caught on Camera": <https://youtu.be/iBvKq55uMOc>
- From Animal Wonders Montana, "Rabbits: What, Where, and How": <https://youtu.be/BovzFTpGB4M> (there are more rabbit videos on their channel, too!)

4. From the Photographs PDF

- Marsh Rabbit
- Varying Hare

BLOSSOM & ROOT

EARLY ELEMENTARY NATURE STUDY // LEVEL 0

My Outdoor Classroom

STUDENT NOTEBOOK



This book belongs to:

LEVEL 0

Exploring Animals, Seeds, and Eggs



Week 1

Date:

My Outdoor Classroom

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for a drawing or a detailed written response.

Today, my outdoor classroom was:

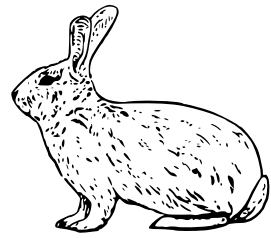
Five horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly apart, providing a guide for handwriting practice or a structured writing area.



Week 2

Date:

Rabbits & Hares



← Rabbit



Hare →

Week 1



Eastern
Cottontail
Rabbit

Week 1



House
Wren

Week 2



Marsh
Rabbit

Week 2



Varying
Hare