

## LESSON PLAN: Three Out of Four Grades 6+/Science

If scientists' predictions are correct, three out of four species will go extinct over the course of the next 300 years. What will the world be like?

### Objective

This activity will help students to understand that extinction isn't just a thing of the past or something happening in faraway places to exotic animals.

### Materials

- Paper and pen

### Activity

Ask students what they already know about extinction, then briefly discuss the concept and its causes both past and present. Key words include **extinction**, **evolution**, **ecosystem**, **adaptation**, and **food webs**.

If possible, go outside for this activity. Have students list all the species they observe (plants *and* animals). Encourage them to turn over rocks, wander slightly, crawl in a garden, and look in a tree. Then remind them of the many species they can't see – those underground or under water, and those that are too small. Challenge them to list as many as possible. Then, tell students to cross out three out of four species on their list. Once they've done this, inform them that those crossed-off species are those that will become extinct for the purposes of the activity.

### Reflection Questions and Activities

1. What role do some of the now "extinct" species play the food web of that ecosystem?
2. What will happen to surviving species that rely on the extinct species for food or shelter?
3. What will happen to some of the surviving species when their main predators die off? What effect will that have on the food chain?
4. Can the ecosystem be healthy, even with those missing species? Why or why not?
5. How might some of the surviving species adapt?
6. Some of Earth's species have survived mass extinctions and others have evolved from the survivors. Challenge students to think about the cycles of extinction and evolution and imagine what the world would look like and how it would change if three out of four species go extinct. This activity lends itself to both written and visual follow-up assignments.