Designing the Perfect Pet Paradise!

Welcome, Liv! Today, we're going on an exciting journey into the world of animal care. You'll become an animal expert, habitat architect, and enrichment innovator all in one! Your mission is to design the most amazing and suitable paradise for an animal of your choice.

Materials You'll Need:

- Paper, poster board, or access to digital design software (like Canva, Google Slides, or any drawing program you like)
- Colored pencils, markers, or digital drawing tools
- Access to the internet for research (we'll find some great, reliable sources!)
- Optional: Craft supplies if you want to build a physical model (e.g., cardboard boxes, fabric scraps, natural items like twigs or leaves – get creative!)

Lesson Activities:

Part 1: Animal Explorer - Become the Expert! (Approx. 60-90 minutes)

The first step to creating a perfect paradise is understanding who it's for!

1. **Choose Your Animal:** Pick an animal you're fascinated by. It could be a common pet (like a rabbit, guinea pig, or a cat), or a more exotic animal you admire (like a Fennec fox or a sugar glider). The choice is yours!
2. **Deep Dive Research:** Using the internet, find out everything you can about your chosen animal. Focus on:
   - **Natural Habitat:** Where does it live in the wild? What's the climate, terrain, and vegetation like?
   - **Diet:** What does it eat? How does it find or catch its food?
   - **Social Life:** Is it solitary, does it live in pairs, or in groups?
   - **Behavior:** What are its typical activities? Does it climb, burrow, swim, jump, play, or rest a lot?
   - **Specific Needs in Care:** What are common challenges or important things to know about keeping this animal healthy and happy (even if it's a wild animal, consider its needs if it were in a sanctuary)?
   - **What is 'Enrichment' for this animal?** How can we keep its mind and body active?
3. **Recommended Research Sources:** Look for websites from reputable organizations like the ASPCA, Humane Society, well-known zoos (e.g., San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Smithsonian's National Zoo), National Geographic, or veterinary organizations.

Part 2: Habitat Architect - Design the Dream Home! (Approx. 90-120 minutes)

Now that you're an expert on your animal, it's time to design its ideal living space. You can draw this, create a digital design, or even build a model!

Consider these elements for your design:

- **Space:** How much room does it need? Think about height, width, and length. Does it need more vertical space (for climbing) or horizontal space (for running)?
- **Shelter & Security:** Where will it sleep? Does it need hiding spots to feel safe?
- **Food & Water Stations:** How can you provide food and water in a way that's natural or engaging? (e.g., puzzle feeders, elevated dishes, naturalistic water sources).
- **Substrate/Flooring:** What kind of floor material is safe, comfortable, and appropriate for its natural behaviors (e.g., digging, burrowing)?
- **'Furniture' & Fixtures:** What structures will it use? Think about branches for perching/climbing, tunnels for burrowing, platforms for resting, pools for swimming/bathing.

- **Climate Control:** Does it need specific temperature, humidity, or lighting?
- **Safety First:** Ensure there are no hazards in your design! No sharp edges, toxic materials, or inescapable traps.

Get Creative! *How can you make this habitat not just meet the animal's basic needs, but also be an exciting and stimulating place for it to live?*

Part 3: Enrichment Innovator - Plan for Fun & Well-being! (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

A great habitat is just the start! Animals also need 'enrichment' – activities and stimuli that keep their minds and bodies active, prevent boredom, and encourage natural behaviors.

Your Task: Develop an enrichment plan for your animal. List at least 3-5 different enrichment ideas. Think about:

- **Sensory Enrichment:** What new things can it smell, see, hear, or touch (safely)? (e.g., new scents, different textures, nature sounds).
- **Food-Based Enrichment:** How can you make mealtime more challenging or interesting? (e.g., puzzle feeders, hiding food, scattering food).
- **Manipulative/Toy Enrichment:** What objects can it play with or manipulate? (e.g., balls, chew toys, items to shred – make sure they are species-appropriate and safe).
- **Environmental Enrichment:** How can you change or add to its environment to keep things interesting? (e.g., new branches, rearranging 'furniture', a new hiding spot).
- **Social Enrichment (if applicable):** Does it need interaction with other animals (of its own kind or sometimes others, if safe) or positive human interaction?

Challenge: *Can you think of ways to use safe, everyday household items to create DIY enrichment?*

Part 4: Showcase Your Sanctuary! - Share Your Creation (Approx. 15-30 minutes)

This is your chance to proudly present your amazing design!

Prepare to share:

- Which animal you chose and why.
- The key features of your habitat design. Explain how each feature meets the specific needs of your animal based on your research.
- Your enrichment plan. Describe your ideas and how they will benefit the animal's well-being and encourage its natural behaviors.
- What you found most interesting or challenging.

You can give an oral presentation, walk me through your drawings/digital design, or show off your model!

Wrap-up & Reflection:

Let's talk about your project!

- What was the most surprising thing you learned about animal care or your chosen animal?
- What part of this project did you enjoy the most?
- How could some of the ideas you came up with be applied to improve the lives of pets people have at home, or animals in local shelters?
- Thinking bigger, if you were to design a community project to help animals (e.g., improving a local park for wildlife, helping a shelter, raising awareness), what might you want to do?

Fantastic work, Liv! Designing with an animal's best interest at heart is a wonderful skill. This project touches on what zookeepers, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, animal welfare advocates, and

even pet product designers do every day!