

Animal Kingdom Newscast: A Green Screen Adventure

Materials Needed:

- A green screen (a large piece of green fabric, a green plastic tablecloth, or even a wall painted green)
 - A tablet or smartphone with a camera
 - A green screen video editing app (e.g., iMovie for Apple devices, CapCut, KineMaster, or Dolnk Green Screen)
 - A tripod for the device (optional, but highly recommended for stable video)
 - Good lighting (e.g., a desk lamp, ring light, or a bright, indirect window)
 - Paper, pencil, and colouring pencils for planning
 - Access to the internet for research and downloading background images/videos
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Lesson Details

Subject Areas & Victorian Curriculum Links (Level 5 & 6)

- **Media Arts:** Plan, create, and present media artworks for specific purposes with an awareness of responsible media practice (VCAMAP032).
- **English:** Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience (VCELY358).
- **Science:** The growth and survival of living things are affected by the physical conditions of their environment (VCSSU072).
- **Digital Technologies:** Plan, create and communicate ideas and information independently and with others, applying agreed ethical and social protocols (VCDTDI037).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Research and write a short, informative script about an animal and its habitat.
- Plan a video sequence using a simple storyboard.
- Set up and film a presentation using a green screen.
- Edit a video to replace the green background with a relevant habitat image or video (chroma keying).
- Present a finished media product that creatively communicates scientific information.

Estimated Lesson Duration

Approximately 2-3 hours, which can be split over a few days.

Lesson Steps & Activities

Part 1: The Spark - Documentary Producer (20 minutes)

1. **Watch a Professional Clip:** Start by watching a 2-3 minute clip from a high-quality nature documentary (like a David Attenborough segment). Discuss what makes it engaging. Notice how the host is often "in" the environment. Point out that we can create that same magic with our green screen!
2. **Brainstorm Your Animal Star:** What animal will be the star of your show? Brainstorm a list of 5-10 animals the student finds fascinating. It could be a local Australian animal like a platypus or a more exotic one like a snow leopard.
3. **Choose Your Star:** Select one animal to be the focus of the documentary segment. This choice gives the student ownership of the project right from the start.

Part 2: The Researcher & Writer (45 minutes)

1. **Fact-Finding Mission:** Using child-safe websites (like National Geographic Kids, Kiddle, or museum websites), research the chosen animal. The goal is to find 3-5 amazing facts. Focus on:
 - Its habitat (Where does it live? What is it like there?)
 - Its diet (What does it eat?)
 - A unique adaptation or cool behaviour.
2. **Script Writing:** Write a short script (about 4-6 sentences) as if you are a nature reporter on location. The script should introduce the animal and share the fascinating facts you discovered. *Example: "Here in the dense rainforests of Borneo, we're searching for the elusive orangutan. These incredible apes spend most of their lives in the trees, using their long arms to swing from branch to branch..."*
3. **Storyboard Your Vision:** On a piece of paper, draw 3 simple boxes. In each box, sketch out a scene.
 - **Box 1:** The opening shot (e.g., you introducing the animal).
 - **Box 2:** The main shot (e.g., you pointing "off-screen" while describing a fact).
 - **Box 3:** The closing shot (e.g., you waving goodbye from the "habitat").

Underneath each box, write the line from the script that you'll say during that shot. This visual plan makes filming much easier!

Part 3: The Director - Lights, Camera, Action! (30 minutes)

1. **Set the Scene:** Hang the green screen so it is flat and smooth. Place your camera/tripod about 1.5-2 metres away. Make sure the green screen fills the entire background of the camera's view.
2. **Lighting is Key:** The most important step for good green screen results! The green screen needs to be lit as evenly as possible, without major shadows. Use a lamp or position yourself so a window lights the screen evenly. Avoid having your own shadow fall on the screen behind you.
3. **Wardrobe Check:** Do not wear anything green! Any green clothing will become invisible along with the background. Choose a solid, contrasting colour.
4. **Rehearse and Film:** Practice the script a few times. When ready, hit record! Film the segment, using the storyboard as a guide. Do a few takes to have options later. Speak clearly and with enthusiasm.

Part 4: The Editor - Post-Production Magic (45 minutes)

1. **Gather Your Backgrounds:** Find and download a high-quality photo or short video clip of your animal's habitat. This will be your new background.
2. **Open Your Editing App:** Import both your green screen video and your habitat background

image/video into the app.

3. **Apply the Chroma Key Effect:** Most apps make this easy. You will typically place your green screen video on a layer *above* the background image. Then, select the green screen clip and find an effect called "Green/Blue Screen," "Chroma Key," or "Cutout."
4. **Refine the Edit:** Use the tool's sliders to make sure all the green is gone without making you look transparent. Trim the start and end of the clip to keep only the best parts.
5. **Add Finishing Touches:** Add a title like "Wonders of the Wombat" and your name as the "Host." Consider adding a quiet background sound effect, like jungle noises or wind sounds, to make it more immersive.
6. **Export Your Film:** Save the final video to your device's camera roll.

Part 5: The Premiere! (15 minutes)

1. **Screening Time:** Watch the finished documentary segment together. Celebrate the accomplishment!
2. **Reflection and Review:** Discuss the process together.
 - What was your favourite part of making the video?
 - What was the most challenging part? (e.g., lighting, remembering lines).
 - If you made another one, what would you do differently?
 - What new fact did you learn that you found most interesting?

Differentiation and Extension

- **For Extra Support:**
 - Provide a pre-written script template with fill-in-the-blanks for the animal facts.
 - Instead of a video background, use a simple, single photograph to make the editing process easier.
 - Focus on just one key fact instead of three.
- **For an Extra Challenge (Extension):**
 - Create a longer, multi-scene documentary. Film different segments and edit them together with transitions.
 - Incorporate a second media element, like adding a close-up photo of the animal that appears on screen as you talk about it.
 - Experiment with costumes or props that a nature reporter might use (e.g., binoculars, a khaki vest).
 - Instead of being a reporter, create a video from the animal's perspective, telling the audience about its own life.

Assessment

Assessment is based on the final product and the student's reflection. Use this simple checklist for feedback:

- **Research:** The video includes at least 2 accurate facts about the chosen animal.
- **Script:** The presentation is clear, logical, and easy to understand.
- **Media Production:** The green screen effect works (the background is fully replaced).
- **Creativity:** The student presented the information in an engaging and creative way.
- **Completion:** The student successfully planned, filmed, and edited a finished video segment.