

# THE TRACKS OF MY MIND

## What's Fact? What's Fiction?

Perceptions are generally formed by some combination of fact, fiction, reason, emotion, and cultural background. In this activity and in the one following it (“Things I Know About **Red Wolves**”), students can examine their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about wolves.

**This is a good beginning activity for a study of wolves. It can be modified for students of any age from kindergarten through high school.** It encourages students to assess what they know and to examine the basis of this knowledge before learning about the “real” wolf.

### Procedures, Tips, and Helpful Hints

- Hand out “The Tracks of My Mind” concept maps.
- Ask the students to draw a picture of a wolf in the center. Let them be creative. They can draw only the head, the “whole wolf,” a cartoon, whatever they visualize. Allow as much time as need depending on the age of the students.
- Say the word, “Wolf.” Tell students they have 3 to 5 minutes to write in the boxes any words or phrases that come to mind. Have them think about physical characteristics, behavior, habitat, stories they have read or heard. Anything is acceptable here.
- For upper elementary and above: At the end of the allotted time, ask students to examine their maps. Have them identify those words/phrases which they believe to be **FACTS** by underlining them in red. Identify those words/phrases which they believe to be **FICTION** in blue. If they are uncertain, have them leave the word or phrase unmarked.
- Older students can be asked to write a **PARAGRAPH** telling what they think and/or believe about wolves. This paragraph can be written on the back of “The Tracks of My Mind” concept map or on a separate sheet of paper or in a journal. Have the students save these paragraphs so they “re-visit” and “revise” them when they have learned more about wolves. With some groups, it might be fun to have a general discussion about the basis of personal beliefs. On what do we base these beliefs and perceptions? Personal experience? What others have taught us? The experiences of others? Research? The opinions of “experts?” Cultural traditions? Stories? How might information and the acquisition of knowledge change someone’s personal beliefs? Can you think of some once firmly-held beliefs that have been proven wrong by information? (Example: The earth is flat.)
- **Extension Activities:**
  1. Have students study their drawing in the center of the concept maps. Underneath the picture, ask them to write some phrases or sentences telling what the picture indicates about their attitudes toward wolves. Is the drawing a cartoon in which the wolf seems harmless and benign? Is the wolf the demon of some traditional children’s stories? Does the wolf appear as a noble symbol of the wilderness? Is the drawing an effort to depict the wolf accurately and objectively?
  2. Have the students meet in groups of 3 or 4 in an activity to reinforce the difference between “fact” and “fiction.” Each student will share his/her concept map with the group members. A recorder will fill in the information on the **attached worksheet**.
  3. Have each group select a recorder. Have students in the group give the recorder **ONE** of the words or phrases on their concept maps. The teacher can make a transparency and record the lists from each group. The words and phrases can then be discussed by the class.

