



Level 2: Grades 3–5

# STUDENT WORKSHEETS

## Lesson 1: Animals in the Natural World—The Importance of Wild Places Worksheet 2: Bees in Poetry (*cont.*)

### A Place for the Bees

Virgil, *GEORGICS* (Book IV: 8-32)

First of all, find a protected place for the bees  
To make their home, a place that's safe from the wind  
That might prevent them from getting back with their food  
And safe from the sheep or the wanton kids that trample  
The flowers down, or the wandering heifer shaking  
The dew from the grass and bruising the rising blades.  
Protect the rich stalls of their honeycombs from the scaly  
Shiny-backed lizard, and from the bee-eater and other  
Birds of the sort, and Procne\*, whose bloody hands  
Have left their signs upon her crimson breast.  
Any of these can devastate the bees,  
Catching them in their mouths to carry them home  
As delicacies to feed to their cruel children.

And there should be a limpid spring nearby,  
Or a moss-edged pool, or else a little brook,  
Almost unseen, making its way through the grass,  
And a big palm tree or oleaster shading  
The vestibule of the place where the bees have settled,  
So when the kings of the hive lead the swarm forth  
In the welcoming season, and glad to be free at last,  
The youthful bees are capering and playing,  
There'll be a stream bank or a pond bank there,  
Where they can escape the unaccustomed heat  
And where the leaves of a tree can shelter them.  
And whether it's pools or running streams, there must  
Be willow shoots and stones disposed across,  
As resting places for them to spread their wings  
And dry them in the sun, if any had happened  
To linger and were caught in a sudden shower,  
Or the wind had suddenly blown them into the water.  
And there should be sweet blooming marjoram\* near,  
And the odor of serpylla spreading far,  
And fragrant savory, and violets  
Drinking from the trickling spring or stream.

— Translated by David Ferry

From *THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL*, reprinted from *The Atlantic Monthly*.

\*Procne: In Greek mythology, a woman who was transformed into a swallow.

\*oleaster: Wild olive tree.

\*marjoram: A kind of spice.

\*serpylla: Plural of serpyllum, Latin for thyme, a common spice.



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## Lesson 1: Animals in the Natural World—The Importance of Wild Places Worksheet 2: Bees in Poetry

With a partner, read the poem “A Place for the Bees” written by Virgil, the greatest poet of the Roman Empire. Virgil lived between 70 BCE and 19 BCE. His *Georgics* comes from the Greek “On Working the Earth” and consists of four books that focus respectively on raising crops and trees (books 1 and 2), livestock and horses (book 3), and beekeeping and the qualities of bees (book 4).

**What have you learned about bees from the poem? Find the answers in the poem.**

**Habitat:** What is the ideal habitat for bees? Describe that habitat.

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**Food Chain:** What do bees need to eat to survive?

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**Predators:** Which animals present the greatest threats to the bees? Why?

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