



MINIS AT HOME

volume 1, issue 15

Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to issue 15 of Minis at Home newsletter. Each newsletter features a special theme and offers pertinent information, a craft, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your pARTicipation is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family.

This week's theme = Polar Bears

When we think of snow and winter, we might think of **polar bears**. They are white like snow, and they live in the Arctic, which has lots of snow almost all year long. We don't have polar bears here in Maryland, but we can enjoy looking at pictures of them and learning about these amazing and beautiful animals.

Polar bears, also called snow bears or sea bears, are the largest **carnivores** (meat-eaters) in the world. They can be as tall as 10 feet when standing on their hind legs, and they can weigh as much as 1500 pounds! That's as heavy as 50 of you and taller than 4 of you standing on each other's shoulders. That's pretty big.



These giant bears actually have black skin, but it's covered with lots and lots of fur. Their fur is really transparent or clear, but it reflects light so it looks white. Last week, we talked about snow and how it is made up of clear crystals of ice but looks white. The polar bear's fur is similar. Do you know why polar bears evolved to appear white? Animals adapt to their environments over many years. This means that they change over time to make it easier for them to live in their habitats. A polar bear's home is mostly covered with snow and ice, so in order for them to blend in with their surroundings (this is known as **camouflage**), they appear white. It's important for animals to blend in with their environment so they can sneak up on prey or hide from predators.

Polar bear fur is not only great for camouflaging, it is also important for keeping bears warm. The strands of fur on a polar bear are almost hollow, similar to a bird's feather. The hollow tubes trap and hold heat from the sun, which keeps the bears very warm. Polar bear fur must stay clean and dry, so polar bears will often roll around in the snow to clean and fluff it up. The cleaner and fluffier the bear's fur, the better it insulates. Polar bears' black skin also attracts heat from the sun, and their 4-inch layer of blubber under their skin keeps them toasty warm.



Polar bears have adapted to living in a freezing world covered in ice, snow and water. Polar bears are both great swimmers and fast runners. They can swim for several days at a time...**non-stop!** They swim looking for seals and small whales to eat as well as to find ice floes on which to rest and hunt. Polar bears paddle with their huge front paws

and steer their bodies with their back paws. But, how do these huge, heavy animals walk on the ice without slipping or falling through thin ice? They spread their legs out wide and lower their bodies closer to the ground to distribute their weight. (Can you do that?) This helps them become "lighter" on the ice. Also, polar bear paws are very wide (up to 1 foot wide) with long, sharp claws which help them dig into the ice. (Yikes! It would be hard to draw a picture or hold a spoon if you had hands like that.) Polar bears need sharp claws so they can dig through ice and snow to hunt their prey. On the bottom of their huge paws are pads (like those of dogs or cats) which contain many small bumps similar to soccer cleats or sneakers with really good tread! The bumps help keep the bear from slipping on the ice.



Polar bears eat seals, fish and sometimes beluga whales. In order for them to find food, they need as much sea ice as possible. They must travel many miles by walking on the ice and also by swimming in between ice floes, looking for their prey. Bears wait patiently on the ice to pounce on a seal who swims up to the surface for air or who may be swimming underneath the ice.

Polar bears not only swim really well, they also smell very well. They can sniff out a seal from as far as 20 miles away, and they can even smell one who is swimming 3 feet under the ice and snow.



How well can you smell dinner cooking or cookies baking?

Polar bears also touch their noses together to communicate.



This is especially true when they are asking their friends to share food.

Activity: Puffy Paint Paper Plate Polar Bear!

Children love "process" or messy art. Mixing and using puffy paint is SO much fun. Writing in shaving cream is also a fun way to practice your name, letters and numbers! If you have food coloring, you can also make different colors of puffy paint for fun.

Materials:

White school glue

Shaving cream

White paper plate

1 Large black pom-pom (or cotton ball painted black)

2 Cotton rounds

Aleene's tacky glue

Paint brush or sponge brush

2 Googly eyes

Procedure:

Mix equal parts white school glue and shaving cream in a bowl to make the puffy paint.

Work with the bottom of the paper plate face up. Use a sponge brush or regular paint brush to dab your puffy paint on top.

Add more glue and/or shaving cream as needed to keep the paint "puffy." Let this dry.

Glue the 2 cotton rounds onto the plate for the polar bear's ears.

Glue the black pom-pom or black cotton ball onto the very bottom of the plate for the polar bear's nose.

Glue the googly eyes in place.

Activity: Sing, Count and Move:

Little Polar Bear

(sung to *I'm a Little Teapot*)

I'm a little polar bear
white as snow
I sit on the ice near a water hole
When I'm very hungry
I make a wish
Then I stick my paw in
And pull out a fish!



(from twinkl.com)

Polar Bear Roll

One momma bear curled up in a ball (curl up in a ball on the floor)

Two babies sleeping, so furry and small (put hands under head as if sleeping)

Three frisky bears roll in the snow (roll around on the ground on your back)

Four bears paddling, shouting, "Go bears go!" (move arms as if you were paddling through water)

5 Little Polar Bears Finger Play

Five little polar bears (hold up the correct number of fingers according to the verse)
playing near the shore

One tumbled in (gently fall to the ground)

Then there were four

Four little polar bears
swimming in the sea (make swimming motions)

One chased a seal

Then there were three

Three little polar bears
ask "what shall we do?" (motion as if you're asking a question; arms out, palms up,

They go swimming shoulders shrugged)

Then there were two

**Two little polar bears
playing in the sun**

One took a nap (hands under head as if
you were napping)

Then there was one

**One little polar bear
all alone
swimming in the sea
back to her home**

**Look who's at home:
It's quite a surprise!**

**All five bears:
one thru five**

1,2,3 4 & 5 and Roarrrrr! (hold fingers up as you count and then give a huge roar)

(adapted from [twinkl.com](http://www.twinkl.com))



Literacy: **POEM TO SHARE**

Why Polar Bears Don't Like Underwear

**If I were a polar bear
I would not care for underwear:
I would not care for dinosaurs
or polka dots upon my drawers**

(because)

**I'd lose my chance to camouflage:
I might have to hide in your garage!**

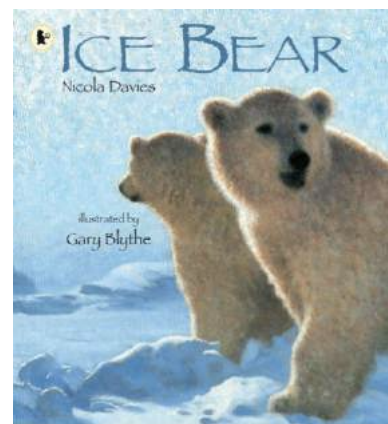
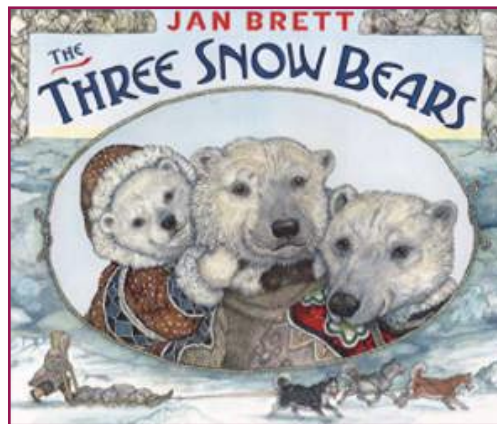
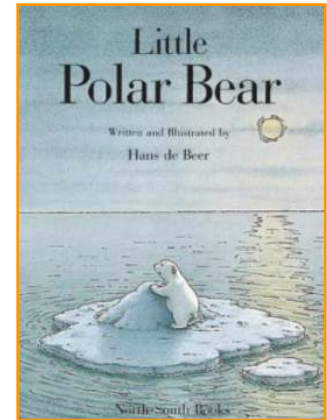
**So, don't cover up my white fur coat
that blends in with the Arctic snow
I love it where it's nice and cold
Lying on ice never gets old!**



Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together

- Little Polar Bear*** by Hans de Beer
- The Polar Bear*** by Jenni Desmond
- The Three Snow Bears*** by Jan Brett
- Ice Bear*** by Nicola Davies
- Polar Bear Night*** by Lauren Thompson
- A Polar Bear in the Snow*** by Mac Barnett



Creatively yours,

Ann Hansen,
Director of Mini Masters at
the Academy Art Museum

ahansen@academyartmuseum.org

Constance Del Nero,
Director of Children's
Education and Community
Programs

cdelnero@academyartmuseum.org

See you next week with issue 16 of **Minis at Home!**

Share your work on <https://www.instagram.com/minimastersaam/>

or email pictures to Ann Hansen
ahansen@academyartmuseum.org

or Constance Del Nero cdelnero@academyartmuseum.org

Please Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/minimastersacademy>