

Name:  
Hour:

## Scranimals : A modern bestiary

A **bestiary** is a book of beasts. Bestiaries were created by artists and writers in **medieval Europe** to tell the tales of fantastic and exotic animals both real and imagined. There was an element of truth and scientific observation to many of the entries in the books.



However, since it was difficult to travel, and there were no zoos in medieval Europe, creators of the bestiaries had to rely on word-of-mouth information. As information was passed from person to person, tales of creatures in far away places like India and Africa were often **exaggerated**. The result was stories about creatures like mermaids, dragons, and unicorns. Many of the writers and artists added their own creative interpretations, so the bestiaries were constantly changing, but their belief in what we know as imaginary animals continued for hundreds of years. It is important to note that many of the fictional creatures were composites of one or more existing animals.



In addition to the observational data that described the creatures in the bestiaries, there was fictional information and stories about the **ethical characteristics** of the animals. The church used the bestiaries as a way to explain **Christian values and morality** to its followers. For example, the lion was a noble king, while a basilisk (half bird, half reptile) was a poisonous creature that could kill with only a glance.

Because there was such a large focus of the bestiary as an instructional tool, the physical descriptions and illustrations were usually not true to nature.

Illustrations were important inclusions in medieval bestiaries. The majority of people in medieval Europe were illiterate, so illustrations in the bestiaries helped to make them more accessible.



Similar images of the creatures appeared in the stained glass windows and as stone gargoyles on the outsides of buildings. Medieval people were very familiar with the stories in the bestiaries, so the illustrations, windows, and stone carvings were visual reminders of the Church's teachings.

**Scranimals** is a book written by Jack Prelutsky. It is a collection of poems about imaginary creatures called Scranimals. The creatures are combinations of one or more animal, fruit, vegetable, or plant and are illustrated by the artist Peter Sis. (**Illustrators** are artists who create images that represent the work of an author or poet.) In some ways the book **Scranimals** is like the medieval bestiaries. Let's brainstorm how it is different.

**Your task** is to create a unique "scranimal." You will need to include at least three different animals in your imaginary creature. (You may substitute one fruit, plant, or vegetable if you prefer.) When choosing your animals for your composite creature, be sure to think like a medieval artist. What characteristics do the animals have? Can you think of animals whose characteristics represent your personality? Are you sly like a fox? Fast like a hare? Curious like a monkey? Use this box to brainstorm a list of animals you might like to use. Come up with at least 10 ideas!

Now, look over your list and circle the three animals you think most represent your personality. In the boxes below, create thumbnail sketches of

creatures that combine the features of those three animals. (If you prefer a horizontal composition, just turn your paper!)

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Once you've finished your thumbnail sketches, choose the one that you feel the strongest about and show it to the teacher. Your next step will be to draw a larger version on the final paper. (Do not draw all of the way to the edge of the paper. We want to leave a little room for a border.)

While you are working on your final drawing, think of a creative name for your scranimal. Try to include the names of the animals you used as inspiration!

List your ideas here:

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**After** you have drawn the final copy, you will need to add some **visual texture** to your creature. The following page is a place to practice drawing texture. When drawing texture, remember to use a lot of **repetition** and **detail**. We will work through one together as a class.


Transfer **3 or more** of your detailed textures to your final drawing.

Now that your scranimal has been designed, you need to think about how to finish the background. Using a ruler, draw a border around the outside edge of your paper. (Ms. Wagner-Marx will demonstrate how to do this!) Do not worry if your scranimal covers up bits of the border. A little bit of overlap will actually enhance your drawing and make it more interesting!

Somewhere in your border, include a name for your scranimal. You are now ready to practice pen and ink so you can finish your artwork!