

Ohio Animals Day Study Guide

by Rick Sowash

Ideas for Educators to use
before, during and after “Ohio Animals Day”
a day-long school visit by
Rick Sowash, Author of
Critters, Flitters & Spitters:
24 Amazing Ohio Animal Tales

Important note from the Author:

In the past twenty years I have visited approximately 100 schools annually and have spoken to over 250,000 school children.

This much I have learned: because every school is unique, a Visiting Author must be**flexible!**

Accordingly, this Study Guide is a book of SUGGESTIONS, not requirements.

The day begins with an Ohio Animals assembly. Some schools prefer the assembly to be just a 'one-man-show,' with me, the author, simply re-telling some favorite stories from the book. This is fine with me. I love to tell stories to kids.

Other schools like to feature costumed students as my 'co-stars' in the assembly, dramatizing some of the stories in the book. This can be a great experience but, of course, it requires the students and teachers to undertake considerably more preparation than is required if I simply present the assembly as a 'one-man-show.'

Either way, this Study Guide is a collection of good ideas I've picked up along the way. Schools may pick and choose among these ideas. No one school has ever implemented ALL of them.

More than once, educators have flipped through this Study Guide and then phoned me in panic: "We can't do all this stuff!" they exclaim. Of course not, I tell them. Then we work out a program that meets the school's needs.

Whatever shape the day of my visit takes, I can promise you that I will do my best to make it meaningful, inspiring and fun for all concerned.

--- Rick Sowash, Author

Ohio Animals Day Study Guide

Introduction

Your school has invited me to spend a day with your students as a Visiting Author. After the publication of my first book Ripsnorting Whoppers, I quickly found myself being invited to visit hundreds of schools. I learned a lot along the way about how to communicate with kids. But the most important thing I observed was this: exciting, meaningful, memorable visits happen when teachers prepare the students ahead of time. This Study Guide will help teachers do just that.

Part One describes the things that will happen during my visit, which is called “Ohio Animals Day.” It is especially useful for my “contact person” at the school because it spells out their responsibilities. Teachers ought to read Part One, too, because Ohio Animals Day is an Author’s Visit like no other, and everyone involved will be better prepared by knowing everything that will happen.

Ohio Animals Day should be the climax of four-to-six weeks of activities, events and projects centered on Ohio history and specifically on the animals whose stories are told in my book Critters, Flitters & Spitters.

Part Two describes many pertinent activities. Imaginative educators and students at your school will develop many more ideas on their own. I will be very eager to see and hear about these when I visit. I may want to incorporate the best of them into future versions of this Study Guide and into the seminars I do for teachers on the subject: Bringing Ohio History Alive for Kids.

Our goal for Ohio Animals Day -- yours and mine -- is just that: to bring Ohio history alive for kids by sharing with them the stories of Ohio’s animals. We want the students to FEEL history as a living, breathing reality. We want them to be fascinated by it. Why? Because this is the best way to LEARN it.

Part One: What to expect during Ohio Animals Day

Note: See the Suggested Schedule which I have sent along with the contract and other materials.

Author **arrives**. (Please send directions!) Reserve a parking space as near the gym or auditorium as possible. Provide three or four students and one adult to help unload and set up.

Orientation for students co-starring with me in the morning assembly. Allow 40 minutes for me to show them how to use the props and costumes I’ll bring along, how to ‘speak up,’ how to walk and stand, where to sit, etc. I also use the Orientation to reassure the nervous co-stars not to worry ... I’ve done this program hundreds of times and, whatever happens, I will make each student look great. Afterwards, they will be very glad that they participated.

The **assembly** introduces, live and in person, some of the animals featured in my book. My ‘co-stars’ are none other than fourth graders from your school, costumed and prepared according to the directions in this Study Guide. The assembly will include music, pageantry, drama, humor, eye-catching props (which I will bring along) and audience participation. Experiencing this assembly, the students will understand that history thrills us, in this case by means of animal tales.

Lunch with the Author allows a dozen of the students at your school to lunch with a ‘real’ author -- me! Each should bring a sample of their own writing for me to quickly read and praise. (Ideas for animal-related writings will be given in Part Two of this Study Guide.) I will also present each of my lunch-companions with a very cool pin-on button proclaiming them to be “A Whopper of a Writer.” The button shows a ‘magic pencil’ with stars and lightning coming out of the tip (representing the great ideas that can flow forth when we write).

Three half-hour visits -- usually one grade level at a time -- give students a close-up look at the writing process and a writer’s life- and work-style. But my ‘hidden agenda’ in these sessions is to inspire the kids and instruct them specifically on how to write well.

Personalized book signing for student and staff. In my contract, your school promised to duplicate and send home with each student the “send-home form” provided in the packet I sent you. Every student and staff member is to be given the opportunity to acquire the book through me that day and at a 40 percent reduction from the price at book stores. The send-home form allows the purchasers to indicate any special messages they would like me to include along with my autograph in the book they’ve purchased. These can be: “For Zach, who loves to read” or “For Caitlin, who loves animals” or “For Kyle, who played the part of the Trilobite in the assembly we did for Ohio Animals Day.”

The all-important ‘contact person’

Please assign a contact person at your school -- someone who can serve as a liaison, “roadie,” host(ess) and go-fer (“Go fer this, go fer that”). This can be a parent, a teacher, a librarian, or an administrator. Whoever they are, their only duty for that day must be to oversee my visit, including loading and unloading. A Suggested Schedule for Ohio Animals Day was sent to your school along with my contract, etc.. It is the responsibility of the contact person to implement this schedule. If questions arise, the contact person may phone me anytime at 513-721-1241.

The Ohio Animals Day Assembly

Some weeks before Ohio Animals Day, by a contest or by some other means, five or more fourth graders must be assigned to co-star in the assembly. They will be playing 16 roles. The same students can play more than one role. Some of the roles involve no speaking whatever, others are more demanding and will require the talents of your school’s sharpest and most self-confident students.

Following is a list of the roles with an indication of the level of difficulty in each:

- 1) Trilobite: MODERATE.
- 2) five students, working together, “do” the Woolly Mammoth: EASY.
- 3) General Sheridan: CHALLENGING.
- 4) Wilbur, Orville and Katharine Wright: MODERATE.
- 5) Charles Shipman: CHALLENGING.
- 6) Canada Geese - four are silent parts: EASY. one is a spoken part: MODERATE.

A Useful Memo to Teachers

(You might want to duplicate this and send it to teachers)

To: Teachers of students who will be ‘co-stars’ in Mr. Sowash’s Ohio Animals Assembly

As part of his visit to our school, Mr. Sowash will present an assembly based on his book, Critters, Flitters & Spitters: 24 Amazing Ohio Animal Tales. Mr. Sowash has asked that we provide several students to take an active part in the assembly by ‘portraying’ the animals about whom he has written.

The chosen students will need to do the following things:

- Read the chapter from Critters, Flitters & Spitters that tells the story of the animal they will portray.
- Be able to answer basic questions about the animal. (The precise questions Mr. Sowash will ask are enumerated in the Ohio Animals Study Guide which he has sent us. Each student will be given the list of the questions they will be asked so that they can be well prepared.)
- Be willing to join Mr. Sowash in front of the student body and (in most cases) speak a few simple words in response to the questions he will ask. (There are a few “parts” that challenge the students a bit more and a few that are totally non-speaking; you will wish to pick students whose strengths are appropriate for such roles -- see the list below.)

Suggestion: The entire book, Critters, Flitters & Spitters could be used as daily oral reading in order to generate interest and excitement.

Thanks so much for your support, cooperation and participation!

About costumes and props

The school does not need to provide costumes or props. I will bring these along.

Knowledgeable Co-stars

The student co-stars must know at least the basic facts about the animal they will depict. They must have read and understood the chapter about their animal in the book Critters, Flitters & Spitters. Each chapter ends with a section entitled “To learn more...” This section directs curious students to other pertinent resources, books and web sites. Extra research is optional, but the students will be expected to “know their stuff.” Ideally each of these co-stars will have their own copy of the book. At the very least, the school library must have multiple copies in stock for this purpose. Also, the teacher has my permission photocopy one copy of each chapter and give the relevant student re-enactor.

During the 40 minute orientation before the assembly, I will explain to the student co-stars exactly what to expect, when to enter, where to stand, when to sit, when to stand up again, how to work with a microphone, how to take a bow at the end, etc. I will also assure them that I will do my best to make their role in the assembly simple, fun and exciting, even if they ‘screw up.’

When the student body enters the assembly area, the student co-stars will be ‘off stage,’ that is, not visible to the audience. They can be out in the hallway. The contact person **MUST** be present during the orientation so that they can oversee these students during the actual program, helping with costumes and making sure that each student is ready to join me when in the assembly I introduce them.

Usually I play funny little songs on my recorder as the student body is filing into the gym.

This gives the seated students something to engage them while they are waiting. When the entire student body is assembled someone must give me a wave. We must not begin the program, however, until everyone has arrived. I dislike beginning and then being interrupted as yet another classroom files in. No formal introduction is required. In fact, I very much prefer to begin WITHOUT a formal introduction. I will introduce myself.

I will speak for about a minute and then will give a cue for music. This will be heard from a Boom Box tape player/CD player or over the school's sound system. The music is the accompaniment for the song "Critters, Flitters & Spitters." I will sing this song with the "help" of the audience. The student body does NOT need to know the song in advance.

Then the actual assembly begins. (The full script is at the back of this Study Guide.)

OUTLINE, IN TEN SECTIONS, OF THE OHIO ANIMALS ASSEMBLY

Section 1) interview with a Trilobite (one student wearing Trilobite costume)

Section 2) Woolly Mammoth makes a brief appearance (five students form the mammoth)

Section 3) I tell the Story of Serpent Mound

Section 4) interview with Gen. Sheridan (one student dressed as Gen. Sheridan)

Section 5) I tell the story of Cy Gatton and the Chicken that Ate Lightning Bugs

Section 6) interview with Wilbur, Orville and Katherine Wright (three students as the Wrights)

Section 7) I tell the story of the alien invasion of Zebra mussels

Section 8) interview with Charles Shipman, who saved the Eagle (one student as Charles Shipman)

Section 9) interview with Canada Geese (five students dressed Canada Geese, in V formation, run slowly, once around the gym, flapping their wings)

Section 10) I tell the story of "A Hero named Lulu"

I will then sing and lead the song again and we'll end the assembly with applause for all who participated.

Last comes photographs. I will pose the students for a group photograph in front of the stage (which includes a backdrop showing a giant book cover of Critters, Flitters & Spitters) and I will pose with them.

Invite the News Media

The Ohio Animals assembly -- with or without a local animal -- will be very attractive to the news media. The contact person should invite every newspaper, TV and radio station for miles around. If the media really understands what will be happening, believe me, they will come. They will LOVE this story and so will their audience. The results will make everyone look great.

About ‘Lunch With The Author’

Who are the best writers in the school? Identify them by means of a contest or assume that all the students are good writers and draw their names from a hat. Arrange for no more than twelve writer-winners to lunch with me, the Visiting Author, on Ohio animals Day. Push together some tables to make a square-shaped table for us in a quiet corner of the school -- perhaps the library -- where the writer-winners can escape the usual cafeteria scene to spend a happy half-hour with a real, live author. I will shake every hand and learn every name. Some schools provide placemats by laminating student’s drawings illustrating scenes from the stories in Critters, Flitters & Spitters.

Some schools decorate the lunch table with an Ohio items -- an OSU flag, red and gray paper plates, napkins and utensils, carnations in vases and cardinals, ladybugs, trilobites and buckeyes scattered all over the table. Cute!

Each winner-writer should bring along a sample of their own writing. Ideas for writing projects are found in Part Two of this Study Guide. I will quickly read each student’s work and inscribe it with an encouraging compliment and an autograph. (Hint: I especially admire students who write using ‘juicy’ words -- adjectives that make me FEEL what it was like to be present at an historical event, words describing the sights, sounds, smells, weather, etc.) I will also present each writer-winner with a colorful pin-on button they can wear, proclaiming them: “A Whopper of a Writer!” Plan on photographing this event. I’ll pose the kids for some really funny photos at the very end of our time together.

Note: this lunch is NOT a serious affair. I do not focus on writing skills during this time. It’s just a fun occasion. I really enjoy these occasions and so do the students!

About the three half-hour “visits”

These visits are most meaningful for the three oldest grade levels. I like to meet with one grade level at a time so long as this does not amount to more than three classes. Ideally, these visits should take place in the school library (because I’m an author and that’s where the books are) and because I make some strong points about the value of reading, literally pointing to books on the library shelves. I’ll describe the challenges I meet in writing my books and describe the writing process in ways that will make kids eager to try their hand at it. I’ll also tell how my grandfather got me interested in Ohio History. And there will be time for the students to ask questions.

What questions are especially welcome?

Students must understand that asking questions is more than just a display of curiosity. It is a gesture that shows politeness, interest and respect for a visitor to the school.

Take some time to consider with your students what questions might be especially welcomed by a Visiting Author who wrote a book about Ohio animals. Write down the questions on a separate piece of paper and give at least one to each student so that everyone feels ready for question time.

Here are a few of my favorite topics for questions: Getting started as a writer, doing my research, traveling around the state, the country and the world, getting paid for doing what you love, the up and downs of being self-employed, my home, wife and children, my favorite stories, movies, books, foods, colors. Hobbies, interests, languages I speak, my many involvements with music. If the students’ questions aren’t moving in these directions, I will re-direct them.

Booksigning

This is important to me. One reason my fee is lower than most authors is because I am my own publisher and can augment my fee with booksales. Many students will want copies of my books. The school library and many of the teachers will want copies to use as resources in coming years. It is not uncommon for the students and staff in schools I visit to purchase, all together, more than a hundred copies of my books.

Critters, Flitters & Spitters is published by the Rick Sowash Publishing Co. Please remember that our contract required the school to make a good-faith effort to sell the book -- simply by sending home the send-home form we provide. This form states the cost of the books when sold in schools I visit (40% less than the usual retail) and asks parents to indicate exactly how they would like the book to be personalized and signed by the author. Parents return this form to the school with a check made out to RICK SOWASH. All the school has to do is gather these forms as they come in and then hand them over to me when I arrive. I will bring along with me a good supply of the books. About mid-day the contact person will help me process the orders and I will autograph the books as the buyers have indicated.

Schools are never 'stuck' with unsold books and there is no shipping involved. In short, I handle everything. All the school has to do is send home and collect the returned send-home forms.

I prefer to sign books sitting at a table in a quiet place. The books are given to the students later. Some schools want the children to line up and wait in front of me while I am signing books. I suggest that this is not a good idea. I can't talk to the kids and sign books at the same time, so I think that's just wasting their time. And who wants to stand in line? Certainly not kids.

There are always many students who do not order a book in advance but who, on the day of my visit, are suddenly seized with a passionate desire to get their own copy. No problem. We'll give them another send-home form and they can return it to the school the next day. The school mails the late-coming send-home forms and checks to me; I sign the books at home and ship them back to the school. And I pay for the shipping. See how easy this is?

Part Two: Preparation of students for Ohio Animals Day

Storytelling and reading aloud

Kids love stories -- and history is just a big story. Teachers can tell or read aloud the true stories of real people and animals from Ohio history. Stories of the interactions of people and animals can be funny, sweet, scary or inspiring. I think Critters, Flitters & Spitters demonstrates this.

Most books written for children aim at a single, narrow age-range. Critters, Flitters & Spitters is different in this respect. The reading level varies quite a lot. Here are my suggestions for the best stories to read aloud to various grade levels:

1st grade - Chapter Four, p. 19 Possum Fable

2nd grade - Chapter Thirteen, p. 73 The Wilds

3rd grade - Chapter One, p. 1 Trilobite

4th grade - Chapter Six, p. 31 General Sheridan's "Rienzi"

5th grade - Chapter Eight, p. 43 The Wright Family's Robin

Invite to your school local people who work with animals

Many people are involved with animals. Pet-owners, farmers, game-wardens, park rangers, Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Seeing-Eye Dog programs, Rescue Dog programs, zoos, Natural History Museums, taxidermists, hunters, equine therapists. Many of these offer school programs. Get in touch. Invite to come to individual classrooms and share what they know. Perhaps they could bring along an animal. Tip: Specify that a classroom visit is to be no more than 30 minutes long. This will allow you to politely cut off a long-winded visitor (before the students begin to squirm), if necessary, by reminding them of the time constraint. On the other hand, if you see that the kids are into it, you can always let the visit continue past 30 minutes.

Before the visit, consider with your students what questions would be appropriate for your guest. Write them down on separate slips of paper. Pass them out so that each student will be ready with at least one good question.

Perhaps the best question to ask someone who is involved with animals would be: How did you become interested in doing what you do? In other words, tell us the story of what inspired your interest. These stories can be inspiring in themselves and we all like to know how things begin.

Afterwards, have every student write a thank-you note to the guest. Send all of them in one big envelope. (At the very least, you, the teacher, should write a thank-you note.)

Writing Activities

History is mainly conveyed to us in words -- spoken words and written words.

Good historians are good writers. They have developed the skill of portraying actual events of the past in ways that make us FEEL what it was like to be there. Students can aspire to be good historians -- and thus, good writers. They can strive to write about history in ways that will be fun to read.

How? By using words that address the senses. Colors, sounds, smells, tastes, the 'feel' of the moment. The student-writer must ask themselves, "If I had been there, what colors would I have seen? What sounds would I have heard?" ... and write, using words that speak to the senses.

Diary Entries

What if an animal could keep a diary? Students who have learned about animals of the past can write first-person "memories" of what their life was like at certain important moments. In other words, they can write diary entries or fragments of an autobiography.

Rienzi was the name of General Sheridan's horse. He participated in some of the most important battles of the Civil War. Rienzi left us no diary or autobiography, but what if he had? What might we expect to find in it? Suppose just one page of it survived, the page about the Battle of Cedar Creek (as described in my book). What would be written on that page? Creating such a page from such a document can be a richly entertaining and informative adventure for a student. And the result will be fun for other students to read, fun for parents to read, fun for you to read.

Students Writing a Single Scene from History

Most history, however, is written in the third person. Students can try their hand at this, too. The key to their success lies in keeping the scope very narrow. Unfolding a complete account of a

major historical event -- what happened and why -- is beyond the ability of most adults, let alone students. But I believe that almost anyone can present a single scene from history.

Teachers must help the student choose a scene from history which includes an animal ... and then try to think of it as a painting -- in words.

Let's take Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie. He and his sailors defeated the British Navy, which was the greatest navy in the world at that time. Let's suppose there was a mascot on board Perry's ship, the Niagara. Let's suppose the animal was a dog. Ask students to imagine a painting of the most important scene in that story. What would be shown in such a painting? Where is the dog? The ship would be seen, with cannons sticking out the gunports, the defenders' rifles bristling on the deck. The surrounding blue of the sky and of Lake Erie would be broken by glimpses of the British ships with white sails and red, blue and white Union Jacks. Orange bursts and puffs of smoke would be seen at the tips of rifles and cannons on both sides. And in the center would be Oliver himself, directing his men, his dark hair wind-blown, a determined look on his face and the ship's dog right there by his side.

Challenge your students to learn about the scene so thoroughly that they can picture it clearly in their imaginations. Ask them to imagine the scene as a painting -- a giant, complicated mural, teeming with fascinating images and details. Their job is going to be to write down what they have pictured. Yes, but where to begin?

Ask them to imagine that this mural depicting their scene has been painted on one huge wall of a huge room and that they are standing in the middle of that room. The painting is there before them -- but no one can see it! Why not? Because the room is totally and utterly dark.

Then ask them to imagine that one small beam of light suddenly illuminates one tiny detail of this vast painting. That illuminated detail is the opening sentence of what they are going to write. The next sentence will spread out that beam of light just a little wider, describing more of the scene. The next paragraph will make it wider yet.

Gradually the whole mural will be revealed. When that is achieved, then the student must undertake the same process in reverse. A good piece of writing often ends with one last detail being "seen" before the lights go out altogether, before THE END.

If I may say so, some good examples of this approach to writing can be found in my book Heroes of Ohio. The chapter on Tecumseh begins: "The white flag of truce trembled, yet there wasn't a wisp of wind. It trembled because the soldier who held it was trembling." In the first three words we "see" a white flag; two more words and we find out that it is a flag of truce; then we learn that it is trembling; in the next sentence we "see" that the flag is held by a very frightened soldier. Next we'll "see" that he is surrounded by Indians at a campfire and that the great Tecumseh is staring at him. The scope of the scene fans out until it is complete. Subsequent events are recounted and the story ends with another, single image -- the face of Tecumseh.

An Ohio Animals Fair

Each student could be assigned a booth space in the gym to explain and explore an Ohio animal. Their job is to decorate the booth with props, reports, drawings, maps, music from the era, connections with Ohio industries and businesses, antiques and artifacts. Students can color with crayons or colored pencils the costume renderings provided in this Study Guide and use these to add to their booth.

The Ohio Animals Fair could take place during the afternoon. While I am conducting my half-hour visits with one grade level, the other grade levels could be visiting the Fair. The other students in the school will need to understand that each booth has been created and is being staffed by a student who is an expert on that particular animal. The other students visiting the fair should have questions ready to ask these experts.

Your school's Ohio Animals Fair may turn out to be such a good thing that you will want to invite the public to see it. Perhaps it should be extended on into the evening. Certainly the media should be invited to come and cover the event.

Make an Ohio Animals Timeline

The stories which make up Critters, Flitters & Spitters are told in chronological order, starting with the trilobite 440 million years ago and coming up to the present day. Using photocopies of the illustrations from the book make an Ohio animals timeline and display it in the hall outside your classroom.

Match the Pet with the Staff Member

This is a contest in which the students try to figure out which pet is owned by which staff member. Invite staff to bring to school a picture of their pets with the staffer's name pencilled on the back. Make a picture board and a tally sheet for students to guess which pet goes with which staff member. No prize is required for winners; this is just for fun. Be sure to return the photos after the contest.

How many Animal Crackers are in the Cookie Jar?

Place the Cookie Jar conspicuously in front of the school office. Put a pile of estimation slips right next to the jar. Have the students write down their guess and their name on an estimation slip. Maybe the winner(s) could get a free copy of Critters, Flitters & Spitters or Heroes of Ohio? Rick Sowash is willing to provide a softbound copy for this purpose. Just remember to ask him.

Stuffed Animals Day

With teacher permission, students may bring a stuffed animal from home to sit with them during silent reading.

Get Your Paws on a Good Book!

Students will put their handprints on paper. They should use both hands, touching their thumbs together to make human "paw prints." There are different ways to do this.

1. Paint the hands of the students with tempera and have the students press their hands on the paper, washing the hands immediately afterwards.
2. Student trace their hands on the paper and outlines their prints in color, with crayons.
3. Students trace their hands on colored construction paper and cut out their handprints.

After getting the human paw prints on paper (one way or another), students will make a small book, gluing their handprint onto the cover, with the fold falling between the touching thumbs. Then fold the book paper to make a little book. Students then write the title of a favorite animal book on the cover and draw a picture to illustrate it. More illustrations can be made for the inside along with a statement about why the student likes the book and what the book is about.

Pennies for Puppies

Place a large container in the cafeteria into which students can place pennies. The money that is collected will be donated to one Assistance Dogs of America. This organization trains service dogs and then donates them to qualifying individuals with physical impairments. For more information, contact Chris Diefenthaler, Executive Director, Assistance Dogs of America, Inc., 8806 S.R. 64, Swanton, OH 43558. Phone: 419-825-3622. Email: ADAIfacili@aol.com.

I Read Instead!

Students are encouraged to read INSTEAD of playing video games or watching TV during the week of Rick Sowash's visit. Students bring in the raffle ticket (below) for each night that they participate in the "I Read Instead" program. The tickets will be put into a school drawing each day of the week and a daily winner will be chosen. The winner receives a free softbound copy of Rick Sowash's book Heroes of Ohio. Rick will provide five copies of these books for this purpose. Just ask. He will bring these books along with him on the day of the visit (he will not ship them ahead of time).

I READ INSTEAD!

This is to certify that the student named below has READ instead of playing video games or watching TV after school and during the evening of (today's date) _____ .

Student's name _____ Grade _____

Parent signature _____

Part Three: RESOURCES FOR TEACHING OHIO HISTORY

Other Resources for information on Ohio History and Animals

A local Public Library's Reference Department. This one is so obvious that it's easy to overlook. It's even better than the Internet. Teachers know to contact their own local public library but it sometimes doesn't occur to them to contact a public library in another part of the state. When students want to research an "obscure" figure or animal event from history, find out the name of the town or county in which the person was born. Call that area's public library and ask for the reference librarian. They will almost certainly have a file of articles on the research subject. They will usually photocopy and send these, often free of charge. This resource has never failed me.

Ohio Public Library Information Network. OPLIN, for short. This on-line resource is only available at public libraries. Many school librarians feel that this is the best source for kids doing research on Ohio. Anyone can download any information they want onto a disk and then take it home or to school.

The Ohio Almanac by Damaine Vonada, Columbus, OH 43215 ph. (614) 466-3831

The Ohio Guide - a WPA project published in 1940, dated but still a great source of 'fun info.'

Contact the Ohioana Library, 65 South Front Street, Suite 1105, Columbus, OH 43215 ph. (614) 466-3831. Ask them for these booklets: "Famous Ohioans" and "Ohio Authors of Children's Books."

1-800-BUCKEYE, Ohio's toll free source for Tourist Information; ask for the "OhioPass" booklet, then ask for the Bulk Order Dept and order "Great Ohio Road Trips."

"Gateways" - a travel guide featuring Ohio Historical Society sites, free, call 888-909-OHIO.

"Ohio Windows" - a bi-monthly newsletter on Ohio History available by calling 800-835-4993.

Video: "Ohio: 200 Years" is the official film of the Bicentennial. To purchase a copy, contact Cleveland public television station WVIZ at 216-739-3931. WVIZ sells the film for \$19.95 plus \$4.95 shipping. By the way, the film score for this film is entirely comprised of music I have composed and is drawn from the CDs of my music which I have produced. More info. about my music is available on my website: www.sowash.com

"It Happened Here" -- a series of 16 fifteen-minute video programs which take students on historical field trips around the state. Titles are: The First Ohioan; Schoenbrunn; Fort Laurens; The Rivers of Ohio; Adena; Home of Thomas Worthington; The Sweetwater Inland Sea (Lake Erie); Village of the Western Reserve; Zoar; Last Indians to Leave Ohio; Two animals (Perry and Tecumseh); Lake Erie Islands; Ohio Canals; Transportation in Ohio; Presidents from Ohio; Wizard of Menlo Park (Edison); Malabar Farm.

Available from WCET broadcasts, by dial access or duplicated for a small fee. Read the WCET Resource Catalog in your building, check with your school resource center, or phone 513-381-4033.

Other Resources for teaching history in general

Cooper, Kay. Who Put the Cannon in the Courthouse Square? A Guide to Uncovering the Past, New York: Walker and Company, 1985.

Bring History Alive: A Sourcebook for Teaching United States History, ed. by Kirk Ankeney, Richard Del Rio and Gary B. Nash, and published in December 1996 by the National Council for the Social Studies; price \$17.95.

Helping Your Children Learn History by Elaine Wisley Reed

About Rick Sowash's Books

To order these books and items, ask your school treasurer to send a purchase order to the Rick Sowash Publishing Co. at 338 Milton Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Softbound copies are \$10 each, hardbound copies are \$15 each. Shipping is calculated thus: \$3 for the first book plus an additional 50 cents for each additional book ordered.

Heroes of Ohio: 23 True Tales of Courage and Character, by Rick Sowash

Ripsnorting Whoppers: Humor from America's Heartland, by Rick Sowash

Critters, Flitters & Spitters: 24 Amazing Ohio Animal Tales, by Rick Sowash

Part Four: The Script for the Ohio Animals Assembly

SCRIPT FOR RICK SOWASH'S OHIO ANIMALS ASSEMBLY (based on his book Critters, Flitters & Spitters: 24 Amazing Ohio Animal Tales)

My name is Rick Sowash and the reason I'm at your school today is because I am an author. I write book about Ohio -- specially for kids.

I wrote this book (point to it) -- "Heroes of Ohio," a book of true stories about real people from our state, people who did brave things. And I wrote "Ripsnorting Whoppers," a book of Ohio Tall Tales. You won't find true stories in that book. Oh no. Intead you'll find big, made-up, impossible stories that could never be true, but they're fun to read, fun to write, fun to tell and fun to hear.

And then I also wrote this other book, a book of Ohio animals, a book called "Critters, Flitters and Spitters; A book of Ohio Animal Tales."

As I was writing this book I kept having this wish, this hope, this dream: I thought: "What if I could somehow jump **INSIDE** this book? Who would I meet? What would I see? What kind of adventures would I have?"

Well, your school has made my dream come true. Today I'm going **INSIDE** my own book -- and you're coming with me!

But first, there's a song I'd like for us to sing it's a song a I wrote. And you can help me with it. Every time I sing the word spitters, make this sound: (spitting sound).
Every time I sing "animals short and tall" clap your hands twice, like this. (clap hands)
And at the end, everybody put your fist up in the air and shout "Hey!" (like this)
Ready?

(CD plays)

Come take a look
Inside a book,
Inside a book of animals,

It's pretty sweet
To sneak a peek,
Inside a book of animals,

There are critters and flitters and spitters (spitting sound)
Animals short and tall, (clap, clap)
Animals of Ohio, we hope you like them all
(repeat)
Hey! (with fist up in the air)

(The following is the **SCRIPT** for portions of the assembly which involve student co-stars. Note: Rick Sowash will bring along all the props and costume parts. Note: Students' lines are in **BOLD type**. The students do not have to memorize these lines. They only need to know the answers. They can put the answers into their own words or just come close to what is suggested below in **BOLD type**.)

Section 1) interview with a Trilobite (one student in a Trilobite costume)
So you're a trilobite. Are you alive today?

Nope.

When did you live?

440 million years ago.

What was Ohio like back then?

It was just a big ocean.

So you lived underwater?

Yep.

What did you do all day long?

Eat and sleep. And try not to get eaten by something else.

There are no trilobites alive today. The last ones died 250 million years ago. But do you have any cousins or relatives that are still alive today?

Sure. Crabs, lobsters and shrimp.

Most trilobites were teeny-tiny creatures. But you're a big one. If trilobites were lucky and didn't get eaten by other animals, they would just keep on growing. You grew to be very big. Then you finally died, sank to the bottom and turned into a fossil. You lay in the mud at the bottom of the ocean for millions of years. Then one day in 1919 ... what happened?

Some workers were digging in the dirt to build a dam near Dayton. And they discovered me.

How did you become the official state fossil of Ohio?

A class of third graders at Beavertown School wrote letters to the Ohio's lawmakers in the legislature in Columbus. And they got lots of other people to write letters. They got clubs and museums and nature centers to write letters, too. They went to Columbus and talked to the state senators and representatives. They gave the lawmakers cookies shaped like trilobites. Finally the legislature made a new law, saying that the trilobite was now the official state fossil of the state of Ohio.

(The student should tell as much of the above paragraph as they can, in their own words. If they leave out anything, I will fill in the missing gaps to complete the story.)

2) Woolly Mammoth makes a brief appearance (five students form the mammoth)

3) I tell the Story of Serpent Mound

Section 4) interview with General Sheridan and Rienzi (student dressed as Gen. Sheridan)

You were a great general, a leader of the soldiers in the Union army during the Civil War. You led your men into Virginia and things were going pretty well. Then, early one morning a sound was heard. And what sound was that?

The roar of cannons.

Yes, and the enemy army was making a surprise attack. What did you do?

I rode my horse toward the sound of the cannons.

And when you came over the top of the hill, what did you see?

I saw the Union army running away from the battle.

Then what did you do?

I rode ten miles to the front line of the battle, shouting the whole time.

What were you shouting?

"Come on back, boys! Face the other way!"

And when the soldiers saw their general galloping forward they cheered, they picked up their rifles and they followed you back to the battle-line. You inspired your men and they fought back. And at the end of the day, who won the battle?

We did!

Sheridan's horse was named Rienzi, one of the most famous horses of American history. And today there is a famous statue in Somerset, Ohio where Sheridan was born... a statue of General Sheridan, with his hat in his hand, riding Rienzi as he did on that famous day in the Civil War when he led the Union army to victory.

5) I tell the story of Cy Gattton and the Chicken that Ate Lightning Bugs

Section 6) three student portray Orville, Wilbur and Katharine Wright
(Note: these questions are drawn from Chapter 12 of Heroes of Ohio, which begins on page 69 and is entitled "They Wanted to Fly.")

Where did you live?

Dayton.

What did you do for a job?

We built, sold and repaired bicycles.

Wilbur, what gave you the idea to try to fly?

Watching birds.

What did you make your airplane made out of?

Cloth and wood.

Why didn't you try to fly in Dayton? Why did you have to go off to North Carolina?

Too many buildings and trees in Dayton. Also the wind was always changing.

How did you decide which brother would fly first?

We tossed a coin.

Which brother won?

Wilbur says: "I did."

What happened?

"I crashed."

Then it was Orville's turn. How many feet and seconds was the first flight?

Orville says: One hundred feet, twelve seconds.

Questions for Katharine:

What sad thing happened in the family that changed your life?

Our mother died and I become the female head of the house.

What did you do to help while the brothers were in North Carolina?

I ran the bicycle shop.

What president did you meet?

William Howard Taft.

Section 7) I tell the story of the alien invasion of Zebra mussels

Section 8) Interview with Charles Shipman

Did you ever wonder how we know so much about wild animals -- what they eat, how they hunt, how they raise their young? We know these things because someone went to a lot of trouble to watch the animals. Here comes Charles Shipman, the man who saved the American Eagle.

Mr. Shipman, the eagle is our national bird, a great symbol of America. Yet eagles were almost wiped out by Americans shooting and killing them. Why did they do this?

People didn't know much about eagles. Some thought that eagles carried off chickens, lambs and even babies... and then ate them!

They thought eagles ate BABIES?

Well, some people did. No one knew for sure what eagles ate.

So you decided to study eagles and see for yourself what their lives were like. But eagles build their nests way up high in the tops of the tallest trees. So how you could watch them?

We built a tower, eighty-six feet high, alongside a tree which had an eagle's nest.

Where was this tower and this tree?

Over near Lake Erie.

You climbed the tower and -- then what?

On top of the tower was a tent. I hid inside and spied on the eagles.

You watched the baby eagles hatch. What did the mama and papa eagles eat? And what did they feed their young?

Mostly fish.

No chickens, lambs or babies?

Nope.

And you watched the baby eagles fly for the first time. Awesome! How long did you do watch the eagles?

Almost every day from spring until fall -- for five years! In stormy weather, in hot weather and in cold weather.

And finally, because of the knowledge you gained about eagles, our government passed a law to protect our national bird, making it a crime to kill the American Eagle. Good work, Charles Shipman!

Section 9) Interview with the Canada Geese at first, then one in particular

(Note: this goose should be the "lead" goose, the one that was at the point of the "V" formation.)

So you guys are Canada geese?

(all together, nodding their heads) Honk! Honk!

What is this "Honk! Honk?" Can't you talk?

(all together, shaking their heads) Honk! Honk!

Wait a minute. Maybe you don't understand. We're trying to do a show here, for these kids sitting on the gym floor. And you guys are probably my favorite Ohio animal. How am I going to answers to my questions if none of you will talk to me?

(all together, shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads Honk! Honk!)

Alright. Alright. Have it your way. I just need one of you to talk to me. So which one is it going to be?

(the "lead" goose is pointed at by the all the others, as they say Honk! Honk!)

OK, great. Now we're getting somewhere. So let me ask you a question. You always fly in a "V" formation. Why?

Lead goose: It's easier to fly in a V formation.

Why?

Because the leader at the point of the V punches a hole in the air. Then the rest of the geese make the hole wider and wider until they all pass through.

Are you always the leader?

Nope. It's hard work and I get tired. So we take turns.

How often does another goose get to be the new leader?

About every half hour.

Cool. When I was a kid, growing up in Ohio, back in the 1950's, I never saw any Canada Geese. In fact, I never saw a Canada Goose until I was a grown-up. And then, all of a sudden, here were these big, wonderful birds! How come I never saw you when I was a kid?

Lead goose: We were almost wiped out by hunters. And the swamps where we lived were turned into farmland.

So what happened that brought Canada geese back to Ohio?

New laws stopped hunters from shooting us. And Ohio started small flocks in special swamps where geese would be safe. Soon we spread out over the state.

And where do people see you nowadays?

Wherever there is water -- fountains, ponds, lakes and swamps.

Another thing I like about you is that you stick together. A Mama Goose and a Papa Goose stay together for their whole lives, right?

(the geese arrange themselves in pairs, arms over each other's shoulders and, all together, they say, getting louder and louder: Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk!)

Then they all fly around the gym again and disappear backstage, while I lead the audience in waving goodbye.

Section 10) I tell the story of "A Hero named Lulu" - and challenge kids to be heroes by helping others ...

We end the assembly with a repetition of the song "Critters, Flitters and Spitters."

THE END (of the assembly)

Who is this Rick Sowash, anyway?

Rick Sowash (b. 1950) and his wife Jo live in Cincinnati, OH. The couple has two children: a daughter named Shenandoah (after the song, the park and the river) and a son named John Chapman (after Ohio's best-known Tall Tale folk animal, Johnny Appleseed).

Rick has been a church musician, a broadcaster for a classical music radio station, an innkeeper, a theatre director and a County Commissioner in his native Richland County, Ohio. He composes classical music "on the side." He is a member of ASCAP, and his classical compositions have been published, performed, recorded and broadcast around the world.

Rick has been a full-time author, composer and publisher since 1991. He performs more than 100 speaking engagements each year, mostly in elementary schools.

For more information visit Rick Sowash's Web Page: www.sowash.com

A Final Word from Rick ...

This Study Guide is very much a 'work in progress.' I hope that it has been helpful to you. Most of the ideas in it have come from teachers and librarians in the schools I've visited. The Study Guide keeps growing because I welcome any and all suggestions as to how it can be improved. If something in the Study Guide doesn't seem clear, please bring it to my attention. If your school has done other, effective activities which are NOT in the Study Guide, again, please let me know about them.

For me, the most convenient way to be contacted is by email: rick@sowash.com

Thanks!

Rick Sowash
September, 2006

A few tips from other schools who have hosted Rick Sowash:

A “real, live author” is coming to your school. You can help the students feel excited about this by putting up a big sign that says, “Welcome Rick Sowash” and displaying the free posters of Rick’s books (which were sent in the same package as the contract and this Study Guide).

Call area newspapers and TV stations in advance. They often send a photographer/camera-operator/reporter to do a story. The community will be interested that you are hosting an author.

Students may illustrate stories from Rick’s books. Display their illustrations in the hallways.

The “Lunch with the Author” should be no longer than 30 minutes. Students are initially awe-struck but soon yearn to rejoin their friends and tell them all about it. Students participating in the “Lunch with the Author” should bring a piece of their own writing. The author will write a few words of praise on it and also autograph it. At least one other grownup **MUST** be present.

The table for the “Lunch with the Author” should be one big table or several smaller tables pushed together so that we can sit more or less in a circle or a square. This makes it much easier for me to get to know the kids. I cannot do this as well if we are scattered at four or five separate small tables.

Sorry, autograph-seekers! Except for signing the writings of the students at the Lunch with the Author and the books students and staff may have purchased, the author will not sign autographs. Experience has shown that “autograph fever” can sweep a school and result in hundreds of disappointed kids.

The assembly will be presented with the least interesting wall to the author’s back. Remove distracting posters, etc. Exits must be to the audience’s rear so that students are not distracted by late-comers, errand-runners or the departure of a student taken ill or needing to use the bathroom. If the assembly is presented in a rectangular gym or room, then I will set up my little stage and backdrop with the longest wall to my back.

Even if there is a stage in the performing area, the author will not use it. Close the stage curtains and turn off the lights backstage. Rick prefers to set up his own little stage on the floor. Rick will place a rope on the floor, indicating the location of the front row. Do **NOT** seat students in bleachers. Rick’s stage and program were devised so that everyone can see seated on the floor.

Once the assembly has begun, doors to the performing area must be closed. Put a sign on the outside, saying: “Keep out, program in progress.” Odd as it seems, adult staff sometimes need to be reminded not to talk among themselves during the program. This is not the author’s job.

Turn on all the lights, but pull the shades. Students are distracted by a view of the outdoors.

The students will sit on the floor in one solid rectangle. I prefer **NOT** to have an aisle down the center of the student body. Folding chairs should be provided for teachers, who should sit to the sides of the student body. It is important that the youngest grades enter the performing area first so that they can sit in the front rows.

Photos should be taken discreetly. The click-and-flash is distracting and detrimental when Rick is trying to hold his audience’s attention. In any case, Rick will pose all the co-stars together for a group shot after the assembly. Also, if asked, Rick will pose with individual students or classes after the group photo session is complete.