

Unmounted Mock Foxhunt (indoor)

Supplies:

Easel & pen or Dry erase board with pen

Green ribbon tied in bow and wired, ready to fasten in hair or on belt loop

Red ribbon prepared as above

Oval piece of foam core or poster board with the word "hole" on it

Crinkled up piece of aluminum foil, about 2 feet long to represent wire

One or two pads of post-it notes in any bright color

Ratcatcher attire (speaker should wear this, or formal)

Formal attire

Hunting whip or two

Real huntsman with horn(if available)

Age of group: it is best to have a variety of ages, from 6 on up, since the younger ones like to play the hounds and adults love to "hilltop" .

Teenagers who have hunted can be the huntsman or whippers-in or be taught that role.

Presentation: (about 1 hour, including hunt)

1. Ask if anyone has hunted
2. Those who have can help answer questions throughout
3. Encourage questions
4. Discuss foxes & coyotes (quarry), their habits, diet, breeding season, where they hang out...include discussion of drag hunting
5. Discuss hounds...types- pictures from MFHA calendar are great
English, American, Cross-bred, Penn-Marydel, Beagles, Bassets
How they hunt-by scent
How they live-kennels
How they are trained-on foot, on bicycle, on horseback, use of whip & voice
Packs are made up of similar types & sizes so they can hunt well together
6. Diagram a run on paper or on dry erase board-large loop, scribble in brushy areas, fencelines, roads. Big loop-red fox, little circles & figure eights-grey fox, straight line for 20 miles-coyote
7. Diagram positions of huntsman and staff, discuss their movements
8. Discuss hand signals used while riding in the field(to tell those behind you that you are stopping or that there is a hole), along with warnings like "ware hole" , "ware wire" , "hound left" , "staff right"

9. Show ribbons and describe what they are for-red in the tail of a kicker, green in the tail of a green horse, stay away from both, pass green horse slowly
10. Assign the role of the fox to a 8-11 year old, brief he or she and group on what to do. He or she will take pack of post-it notes, leave the room and lay an easy to follow trail on the floor or low on the walls. Post-it notes should be stuck at approximately 6 foot intervals. Give fox the "hole" and the "wire" to place along the way. The fox should be given a 5 minute head start and go to ground in a closet, under a desk or a similar place(tell fox this, not group).
11. Assign the role of hounds to 3 or more people. They should be willing to speak like a hound when following the scent. Or they can clap, be given kazoos or other noisemakers.
12. Assign whippers-in & huntsman(these people might have to run to keep up with hounds) if speaker is not huntsman
13. Assign fieldmaster and brief the "field" on what is going to happen
14. Conduct mock hunt-cast the hounds, tell your field to keep up, cheer the "hounds" on, if they lose the scent, slow them down to "re-cast", and point out to field what is happening. Use appropriate hand signals at the hole and the wire. Have hounds leave post-it notes where they are found in case they have to backtrack.

You will find that the human hounds act a lot like a very intelligent pack of hounds, they will "check" (lose the scent and become quiet), re-cast themselves(fan out to find scent again), get very excited when lots of "scents" are found, get strung out(whips will need to push the tail hounds-those straggling and huntsman will have to hustle to keep up with lead hounds.

When the fox is found, have everyone gather around, explain that the huntsman makes a big fuss over the hounds, blows the horn call "gone to ground", then hounds are re-cast to find a new fox. The whips will count the hounds, if all are there, they report to huntsman "all on".

Discuss what happened, when you saw the hounds working, when they were "loafing", when they were in "full cry", if they re-cast, lost scent, etc.

The mock hunt can be done over and over, with different participants playing the fox and other roles.