

EXPLORE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM. LEARN INSIDE OUR STATE.

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**Hearty Alpine Tundra**  
**Rocky Mountain National Park, Grand Lake Entrance**

**Background:** The Alpine tundra ecosystem begins about 11,000 feet above sea level and has a distinct border of no trees. This land of extremes is defined by areas with cold temperatures, strong winds, and short growing season. While you might think this biome is for the hardy, the vegetation here is very fragile. With such extreme conditions living things have to adapt in order to survive. Watch these videos: [Alpine Tundra Biome](#) and [Alpine Tundra Biome Explained](#) before your trip to Rocky Mountain National Park too learn more about the alpine tundra.

**Word Alert:**

**Alpine Tundra**—treeless biome due to high elevation found throughout the world

**Vegetation**--plants

**Biome**—a natural community of fauna and flora living in a major habitat

**Perennial**—plants that come back yearly.

**Marmot**—the largest of the squirrel family

**Pika**—a mountain dwelling animal with short legs. They resemble their relative the rabbit but have short ears.

**Hibernate** —a type of sleep some animals (marmots in the alpine tundra) do for several months to escape the extreme cold

**Lichens**—a slow-growing, crusty-looking plant that grows on rocks, walls, or trees

During your time at Rocky Mountain Park, pay attention to the landscape around you. The alpine tundra is such a different landscape than can be found in many other parts of the state. High altitude, low temperatures, and short growing season make this area such a fragile place in Rocky Mountain National Park. Not many animals or plants can survive.

After watching the videos above, ask the following questions.

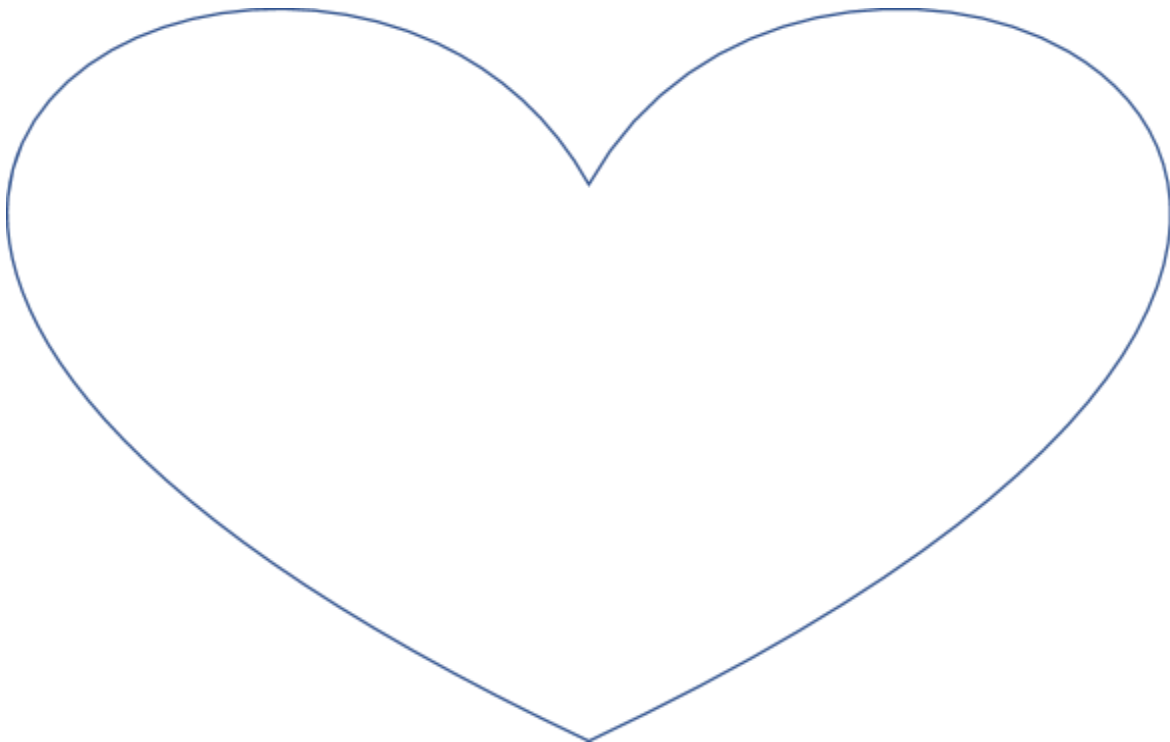
**Questions to Ask:**

1. Why aren't there many animals in the alpine tundra? *Not much to eat, very cold weather*
2. Why should we stay on the trails? *The plants take a long time to grow back.*
3. What are the animals in the alpine tundra? *Marmots, pikas, bighorn sheep, with elk and bear migrating*
4. What adaptations have the plants and animals made to survive? *Plants have hairs on them to hold in the heat and grow low to the ground. Marmots hibernate and the pika have rounded ears to keep the heat in.*

**Activity:**

Using the word bank below, either draw pictures of what you have learned about the alpine tundra or write the words with a dot in between words around the heart to remember the fragile biome.

**Hearty Alpine Tundra**



**Word Bank**

pika  
bear  
lichen  
fragile  
elevation  
hair

marmot  
bighorn sheep  
moss  
treeless  
adaptations  
extreme

Elk  
perennial  
biome  
hibernate  
cold  
vegetation