

Trees As Habitats

Standard 2.4.2: Observe that and describe how animals may use plants, or even other animals, for shelter and nesting. (Knowledge: animals, plants, shelter, nesting.....Skills: observe, describe)

Objective: Students will describe ways in which animals and plants depend on trees for survival.

Assessment: Students will write/illustrate one or more ways that they observe animals or plants using a tree for survival.

Materials: *Good-night, Owl!* by Pat Hutchins; several of the following items that show signs of plant or animal life in a tree: chewed leaves, egg shells, spider web, moss, twigs, bark, fruit, nuts

Introduction (Engage)

Read *Good-night, Owl!* by Pat Hutchins. Ask students to name the animals that visited the tree, what they were doing there, and what sounds they made.

Step by Step Instructions (Explore)

Show the items from the tree. Allow students to pass around the items.

Ask: Have you seen any of these things in a tree? What have you seen? What is [item] doing in a tree? What might [item] do for the tree?

Give the students clipboards and pencils. Attach a small, leaf-shaped paper for recording observations. Take the class outside. (Gardner: naturalist) Divide students into small groups and ask them to examine trees. Have them find things that are/were living on tree branches or the tree trunk. Have students write about and/or draw at least one object that uses the tree for survival. Allow 10–15 minutes.

Other questions to ask as I watch students explore: Do you see any animals flying to or away from the tree? Do you see any animals climbing on the tree? What plants do you see growing around the tree? How can you tell that an animal was here? (Bloom: Analysis) Why might it be spending time in the tree? If you were a [item], why would you need to live in a tree? (Bloom: Synthesis) Do you see different things up high than down low?

Closure (Engage)

Bring the class together. Have them sit on the floor in tree formation (i.e., a line of students becomes the trunk; short rows of students extend out and become the branches). (Gardner: kinesthetic) Ask several students to stand and share what they found, and do actions to match the object they present. Tape the leaf papers on the wall in the shape of a tree. Use the findings as a springboard for a future discussion on protecting trees, and exploring the objects themselves.

Adaptations

ADHD: Give toilet paper tubes or paper towel tubes for students to use as scopes / binoculars during their investigation. Hopefully, this will focus their attention on a small area and block out distractions. For more structure, print on the back of the leaf paper some possible findings for the student to find and check off before noticing new objects.

High ability: Ask these students to add more detail to their sketches/descriptions. Provide an easy reference book so they can try to identify possible names of the objects they describe. Also, ask these students to draw on the other side of the leaf some consequences of losing tree habitats.

Reflection

I expect students to engage in exploration during the step-by-step phase. I expect them to try to answer the open-ended questions I pose through observing and recording. I hope they will also pose questions of their own.

Resources

- *Indiana Science Grade 3 Standards Resource*, February 2003.
- *Pre K–8 Environmental Activity Guide*, American Forest Foundation, 2009.