

Celebrity of the Slough

Subject: Theater

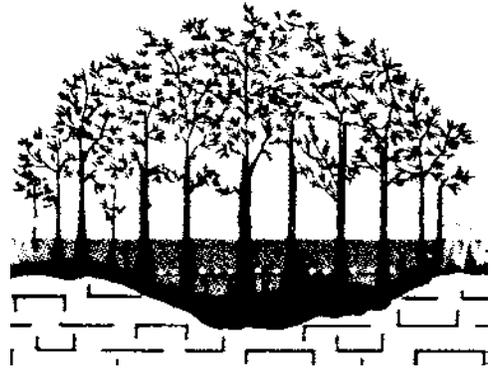
Duration: 45 minutes

Location: Outdoors / Classroom

Key Vocabulary: Adaptation, exotic, buttress, cypress slough, habitat

Related Activities: The Giving Tree; The Lorax Activity

Florida Sunshine State Standards: TH.A.1.2



Objectives. The students will be able to show their concerns about the Everglades/South Florida environment from alternative perspectives, using the art of drama.

Method. The students will portray cypress trees and dramatize situations which may affect a tree.

Background. Trees are a natural part of our environment. The Cypress tree grows in water and usually has a buttress trunk (wide at the base). On a daily basis, trees experience nature's offerings; a bird perching on a limb; a snake crawling on it; a wind storm. However, the natural way of things is often changed when humans enter the picture. When exotic plants like the Melaleuca are introduced into an area by humans, they often compete with the native trees for growing space and water. Humans create other impacts as well. Nature trails made through the forest may require some tree removal. Perhaps an uncaring visitor wishes to leave his/her mark on the tree or cut it down to make furniture from it.

Suggested Procedure

1. Discuss the cypress slough with your students. (Refer to the "Natural History" section for more information.)
2. Ask the students to read the section on exotic species in the Appendix. Define the concept of exotics.
3. You may wish to read the short story, The Giving Tree, with your students if you have not already done so. (See the activity, "The Giving Tree.")
4. Take students outside and form a large circle. Choose one student to go to the center of the circle. This student will represent a cypress tree. Ask this student to stand tall and spread his/her legs apart to make a buttress trunk.

Materials

- Optional: props for the situations listed in procedure #5.

5. Select another student from the circle to act out one of the following dramas: (Encourage the students to be creative.) It may be helpful to give props to the students who are dramatizing, e.g. a cup of water can be used to signify a rainstorm, a paper fan can be used to create wind.

- create a gentle breeze
- a violent windstorm
- thunder and lightning
- person climbing the tree's trunk
- a forest fire
- someone carving their initials in the tree's bark
- a squirrel running up the tree trunk
- planting the tree
- harvesting the tree
- air plant seed blowing in the wind and landing on the trunk
- a snake crawling on a branch
- an exotic tree shoving the cypress tree out of the way
- a bird nesting in the branches

6. Following the dramatization, ask the “tree” how he/she felt when this situation occurred. Ask the student acting out the drama how he/she felt.

7. Choose two new students from the circle - one student should be the tree, while the other acts out another situation listed above. Repeat the procedure, being sure to discuss how the tree is feeling in each of the situations. You might have several situations occurring at the same time.

Evaluation

Discuss with students some of the things we get from trees (shade, homes for wildlife, paper products, homes, furniture). Do we place a high value on trees? Do we treat trees as if they are valuable? How can we take better care of our native trees? (We can plant native trees instead of exotic trees for landscaping and protect native trees and their habitats. We can conserve and recycle paper products.)

Extension

Ask the students to write a short autobiography of a cypress tree.

