

Habitat Hunt

Subject: Science, Spelling

Duration: 1- 1 1/2 hours

Location: Classroom / Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: Habitats, flora, fauna

Related Activities: Do You Sense What I Sense?; Population Interaction; Habitat Hold-Up

Florida Sunshine State Standards: LA.4.1.6.5, LA.5.1.6.5, LA.6.1.6.5



Materials

- Colored poster board - 34 pieces (2" x 9")
- Black markers

Objectives: Upon completion of this activity, the student will be able to: a) compare and contrast four habitats found in Everglades/South Florida national parks, b) distinguish the flora and fauna that live in those habitats, and c) correctly spell or sound out seventeen vocabulary words.

Method: Students will study vocabulary words pertaining to wildlife and their habitats. Students research habitats and the flora and fauna found in each.

Background: This activity covers the habitats found in Everglades and the other South Florida national parks. Many of the plants and animals have specific needs that are met in varying degrees within each habitat. For instance, a tree snail is adapted to life on smooth-barked trees that grow on dry land. These trees are found only in the tropical hardwood hammocks of the national parks and the Florida Keys. The alligator, on the other hand, has adapted to many habitats; the cypress slough, the sawgrass prairie, and the mangrove estuary. Refer to the "Natural History" section for more information regarding habitats, flora, and fauna.

Suggested Procedure

1. Discuss with your class the various habitats found in the Everglades, as well as plant and animal life found in each.
2. Have the students research each habitat. Ask them to list characteristics specific to the habitat, as well as examples of flora and fauna common to each. (Use pp. 141-180)
3. While the students work, the teacher completes the following:
Choose seventeen vocabulary words. Make sure to use at least four habitat words: hammock, sawgrass, cypress slough, pineland, or mangrove. The remaining words should be plants and animals found in those selected habitats. Write one-half of each word on different pieces of colored poster board. For example: If you choose the word ALLIGATOR, write ALLI on a green piece of poster board and GATOR on a blue piece of poster board. When the green and blue sections of poster board are placed correctly side by side, they spell out the word ALLIGATOR.
4. Shuffle the completed cards. Pass out one card to each student making sure that they are face down.
5. Ask the students to show their cards and try to find their mate in three minutes or less.

6. When time is up, review the vocabulary words with your students.
7. Have the pairs who are displaying the four habitats spread out across the room. Ask the remaining pairs to locate and stand behind the habitat which is common to their vocabulary word. Create a discussion to see if students agree with the selections made by each pair. Are there other possibilities? Remember: plants and animals may use more than one habitat. There could be several right answers.
8. Now have the students review their earlier assignment (procedure #2) and list the factors that make each habitat different (type of plants, amount of water). Then have them compare the animals that live in each habitat, as well as those that are dependent on more than one habitat.

Evaluation

Discuss with students what happens when the sawgrass habitat becomes polluted. What happens when the mangrove trees are removed for more development? What natural factors cause destruction of native habitats? Talk about what can be done to help preserve habitats.

Extensions

- Design a mural depicting one or all of the habitats and their inhabitants.
- Have students create food chains within each habitat and/or between habitats showing their interdependence. Some examples might be algae, mullet, dolphin; sawgrass, deer, panther; shrimp - mangrove snapper - people.
- Ask the music teacher to lead students in singing the song, “My Habitat” (p. 220). Have the class work on writing three additional verses which refer to the sea grass beds, mangroves, and cypress habitats.



PHOTO CREDITS: SLOUGH-GOPAL VENKATESAN; ECO POND-NPS/TIM TAYLOR