

A Weekend Nature Journaling Lesson Plan Part One

Get the Class Outside



Introduction

This lesson plan was created for use by parents and educators and encourages use of outside classrooms. Where better to learn subjects like science or English while heightening awareness of our environment? This lesson plan was created for grades 5-8 but may be easily adapted for all ages. The lesson plan includes group and individual activities which build confidence and social skills. As a result, perhaps the lesson may result in increased stewardship of the land. Anyone is welcome to use the lesson plan and make copies. Please refrain from using this information for publishing purposes unless notification and credit is given to Jackie Gibbons, MAE.

Exploration Creates Good Stewards and Reinforces Learning



Environmental Issues: Protecting Our World, A Weekend Lesson Plan for Grades 5-8

This lesson plan is recommended for grades 5-8 but can be used for other ages with some minor modification. The main goal is to raise environment awareness in the local environment by gathering information about wildlife and plant life. Additional goals include using observed information to compile a nature journal with observations, items of interest and research findings and to synthesize information from the nature journal to create a short presentation. Activities are performed inside and outside the classroom and include individual and group activities.

Key concepts addressed within this lesson plan may include ecosystem, environment, biodiversity, food web, ecosystem conflicts between animal, plant and human and different points of view. Chosen focus is up to the discretion of the student and the instructor's role should be to function as a resource and facilitator. All lessons are in 4-hour segments with a break in the middle of the lesson. The lesson times may vary and 50% of activity time should be spent outside the classroom exploring the environment. Some preparation time is required for the initial classroom exercise but is only necessary one time as all are reusable in later classes.

Overall Objectives

- Raise student awareness of their local environment.
- Increase ability to synthesize information.
- Increase independent and critical thinking about the environment.
- Learn to use a nature journal to record observations.
- Increase ability to research a chosen topic.
- Understand how we are all connected.

- Increase understanding of environmental terms and concepts.
- Raise awareness of how animals, plants and humans may be in conflict.
- Becoming familiar with governmental role.

Lesson One Details

Objectives for Lessons One and Two:

- Students will learn new environmental terms.
- Students will understand how the food web functions.
- Students will explore and record elements of the local ecosystem including observations on plant, animal and human aspects.

Critical Thinking Questions:

- What happens if vegetation or animals are unable to adapt to changes in their environment? What about humans?
- How can changes in our environment affect our access to quality foods? What type of changes might those include?

Key Concepts: Environment, ecosystem, imbalance, pollution, food web, living environment, humans and society, analysis and investigation.

National Standards Addressed: Life Science, English and Writing/Language Arts, Science in Personal and Social Perspectives, Geography

Time Required: Two 4-hour increments (approximately)

Materials:

- **A journal and writing instrument** is required for each student.
- **Index cards:** of local vegetation and animal life on index cards to be distributed to students.
- **Pre-Quiz Handout:** reviewing terms listed above to check for prior knowledge.
- **Pre-Quiz Answer Key:** provided to students for self-grading.
- **Food Web Handout:** provided to each student as a reference.

Activity One (in class or preferred outside classroom):

(45 minutes)

Students complete the pre-quiz then are provided the correct answers to grade themselves. All papers are given to the instructor to check for knowledge. A brief discussion of each definition is reviewed for class.

Activity Two (in class or preferred outside classroom):

(45 minutes)

Students are put in groups of 4 and asked to brainstorm about what types of plants and animals they know exist in the local environment and what they know about them if anything. They are asked to share this information with the class.

(15-minute break)

Activity Three (in class or preferred outside classroom):

(60 minutes)

Students are provided their nature journals and writing instruments and given instructions on how to use them. Students are instructed that during the first *nature walk* through the woods they are to choose one or two plants, write down every detail that they can including but not limited to taste, touch, smell, color, etc. An example should be provided of a journal entry describing a plant.

Pictures of local vegetation and animal life is laid out on a table and students are asked to choose which one they would like to seek out during the initial *nature walk*. All of the cards have descriptions on the back with scientific names and usual locations. The instructor will briefly review cards and invite discussions from students who are familiar with those presented.

(1-hour break for lunch)

** Ask students to leave journals, writing instruments and chosen index cards until they return. Ideally, lunch would be done in a group setting outside.

Lesson One Pre-Quiz

Directions: Choose the correct answer by putting a “T” for true or “F” for false in the blank beside each statement.

___ **Adaptation** means that an animal or plant has a behavior or characteristic that helps it survive in an environment.

___ An **environment** only includes plants and animals.

___ **Habitat** is the natural place where a specific organism lives. It is part of the ecosystem.

___ Plants, animals and humans are the only components found within an **ecosystem**.

___ If something is referred to as **native** to an area it means that it originated or has adapted to live in that area/environment.

___ **Pollution** is something that is introduced into the environment that may be harmful to the environment and to the local and global ecosystem.

___ The **food web** does not include humans.

Lesson One Pre-Quiz Key

Directions: Grade yourself on the quiz you just took. Read the entire Pre-Quiz as it provides correct information for the incorrect statements.

 T **Adaptation** means that an animal or plant has a behavior or characteristic that helps it survive in an environment.

 F An **environment** only includes plants and animals.

This response is false. Environment includes all physical surroundings including those surroundings in nature.

 T **Habitat** is the natural place where a specific organism lives. It is part of the ecosystem.

 F Plants, animals and humans are the only components found within an **ecosystem**.

This response is false. Ecosystems contain the living and the nonliving elements that all function together as a unit; the environment that the living are a part of is included in the ecosystem.

T If something is referred to as **native** to an area it means that it originated or has adapted to live in that area/environment.

T **Pollution** is something that is introduced into the environment that may be harmful to the environment and to the local and global ecosystem.

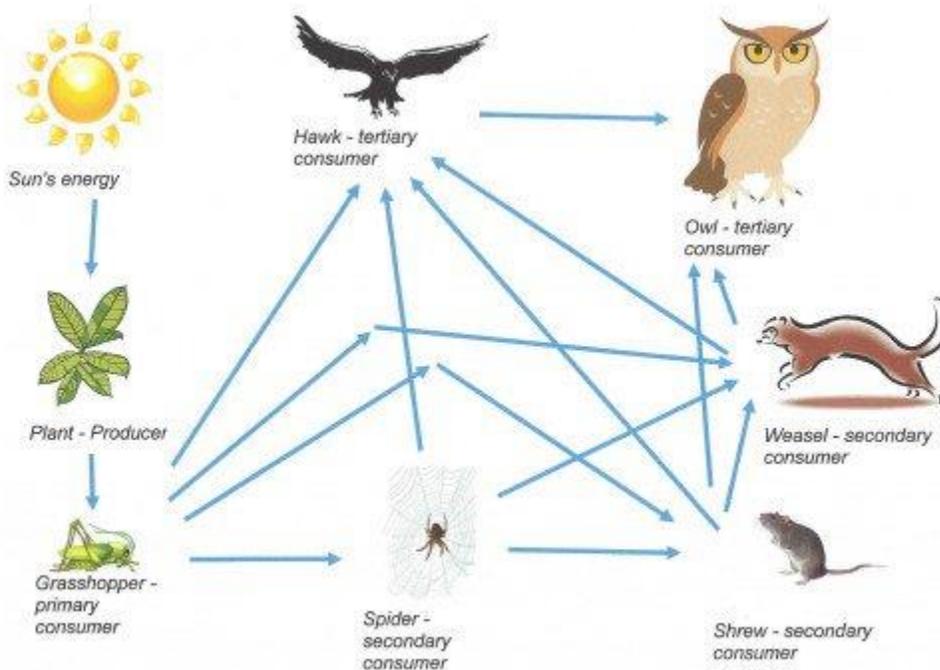
F The **food web** does not include humans.

The food web includes animals, plants and humans.

The Food Web Handout

Look at the following diagrams and discuss them paying close attention to how each item on the diagram is connected to the other.

The Food Web



Source

Food for Thought, Class Discussion Point

What do you think happens when one part of the food web is affected? What if a species dies off? Examine connections between animals (and perhaps habitat).