Which Way is Up? The Tree of Life in Africa

Students learn important lessons about the interdependency of plants and animals through the use of an engaging children’s book.

Author: Mimi Norton
Grade Level: 2-3
Duration: 2 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT TWO PLACES AND REGIONS
4. The physical and human characteristics of places

Arizona Social Studies Standard

Grade 2
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 2 Places and Regions
PO 3 Discuss physical features (e.g., mountains, rivers, deserts) in the world.
Concept 5 Environment and Society
PO 1 Identify ways (e.g., agriculture, structures, roads) in which humans depend upon, adapt to, and impact the earth.

Grade 3
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 5 Environment and Society
PO 1 Identify ways (e.g., farming, building structures and dams, creating transportation routes, overgrazing, mining, logging) in which humans depend upon, adapt to, and impact the earth.

Arizona Language Arts Standards

READING STANDARD
Grade 2
Strand 2 Comprehending Literary Text
Concept 1 Elements of Literature
PO 1 Describe literary elements of text including characters, plot (specific events, problem and solution), and setting
PO 3 Sequence a series of events in a literary selection
PO 4 Identify cause and effect of specific events in a literary selection

Concept 2 Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature
PO 1 Compare events, characters and conflicts in literary selections from a variety of cultures to their experiences

Strand 3 Comprehending Informational Text
Concept 1 Expository Text
PO 1 Identify the main idea in expository text
PO 2 Locate facts in response to questions about expository text
PO 3 Locate specific information by using organizational features (e.g., title, table of contents, headings, captions, bold print, glossary, indices) in expository text.
PO 4 Identify a variety of sources (e.g., trade books, encyclopedias, magazines, electronic sources, textbooks) that may be used to answer specific questions and/or gather information.
PO 5 Locate specific information from graphic features (e.g., charts, maps, diagrams, illustrations, tables, timelines) of expository text.

Grade 3
Strand 1 Reading Process
Concept 6 Comprehension Strategies
PO 1 Predict events and actions, based upon prior knowledge and text features
PO 6 Connect information and events in text to life experiences and to related text and sources

Strand 2 Comprehending Literary Text
Concept 1 Elements of Literature
PO 4 Make relevant connections (e.g., relationships, cause/effect, comparisons) between earlier events and later events in text

Concept 2 Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature
PO 1 Compare events, characters and conflicts in literary selections from a variety of cultures to their experiences

Strand 3 Comprehending Informational Text
Concept 1 Expository Text
PO 2 Locate facts in response to questions about expository text
PO 3 Locate specific information by using organizational features (e.g., title, table of contents, headings, captions, bold print, key words, glossary, indices, italics, key words) in expository text.
PO 4 Use a variety of sources (e.g., trade books, encyclopedias, magazines, atlases, almanacs, electronic source, textbooks) to answer specific questions, and/or gather information.
Overview

This is the Tree by Miriam Moss is a story about how the wildlife of Africa depend on the ancient baobab tree. Virtually every part of the baobab tree is important to animals, birds, insects, or humans. This unique tree provides shelter, food, and medicine, and many other things.

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to demonstrate the interdependency between plants and animals.

Understanding of the importance of our natural resources is a valuable lesson in conservation.

Materials

- This is the Tree by Miriam Ross
- Chart paper
- Story paper or drawing and writing paper
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- World map
- Map of Africa
Which Way is Up? The Tree of Life in Africa

Materials for use in Extension Activities:
- Brown butcher paper cut into the rough shape of a baobab tree (approximately six feet high) to affix to a bulletin board or wall
- Outlines of parts of baobab tree

Objectives

The student will be able to:
- Name the parts of the baobab tree that are useful to humans and wildlife (as described in the book).
- Illustrate one part of the baobab tree and describe a use.
- Draw a picture depicting his or her choice of the part of the baobab tree that he or she feels is most important.
- Write a paragraph explaining why it is his or her choice.
- Recall facts about at least one part of the baobab tree.

Procedures

SESSION ONE
1. Discuss the cover of the book.
2. Ask students to name the animals on the cover.
3. Ask students where they think the story takes place. Point out Africa on the map.
4. Ask students if they have ever seen a tree like the one on the cover.
5. Ask for descriptive words to describe what the tree looks like.
6. Read the book.
7. Review the parts of the tree and its uses. (Use one page of chart paper for each part of the tree: Leaves, flowers, fruit, trunks, roots, bark, wood).

SESSION TWO
1. Review chart items.
2. Have students choose one part of the baobab tree that they feel is the most important.
3. Tell students to pretend that they are in Africa to study the baobab tree and help in its conservation. They are each going to draw a picture to aid in this attempt. Each picture must illustrate what he/she considers to be the most important part of the tree. They must also write a paragraph explaining why the student feels that this is the most important part.
4. When finished, have students share their paragraphs with the class.

Assessment

Assessment Checklist: Student must achieve 80% accuracy.

Did the student:
- Draw a picture depicting his or her choice of the most important part of the baobab tree? (2 points)
- Write a paragraph about the drawing explaining why he or she feels that it is the most important part of the tree? It should include an introductory statement, two descriptive statements, and a concluding statement. (4 points - one for each part)
- Write in complete sentences using proper punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and good penmanship? (5 points)
- Describe the uses of the illustrated part of the tree? (2 points)

Extensions

Divide students into teams with each team given one of the chart pages listing the parts of the baobab tree (as described in Procedure #7). Have each team act out the use of the tree as described in their assigned chart. The class should try to guess which part of the tree each group is acting out. Each group could also cut out an outline shape of their part of the tree describing its uses then affix it to the large tree.

Using string, children measure the diameter of the limbs and foliage of the baobob tree.

List all of the creatures of the animal world that make the baobab tree its home. Students use large drawing paper to illustrate the tree with its inhabitants.

Sources

Moss, M. This is the Tree. La Jolla, CA: Kane/Miller Book Publishers. ISBN 0-916291-98