

LIFE ON A DEAD LOG

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Grade Level: 3

Adapted From:

[<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Education/ClassroomScience/DecomposingLogs/Teacher/default.cfm>]

Focus:

Students will learn about decomposition, animal habitat, and the factors that effect decomposition.

Objectives:

1. Students will learn that decomposing matter is habitat for many plants and animals.
2. Students will learn the interdependence of things in nature.
3. Students will understand the connection between objects in nature with habitat ecosystem.

Standards:

SC 3.1.2 2000

Participate in different types of guided scientific investigations, such as observing objects and events and collecting specimens for analysis.

SCI 3.2.5 2010

Describe natural materials and give examples of how they sustain the lives of plants and animals.

SCI 3.3.1 2010

Identify the common structures of a plant including its roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds. Describe their functions.

Background:

Even when things die whether they be plants or animals, they are still very important to the environment. When something dies it goes under a process called decomposition. Things decompose in two ways physically and biologically. Both these ways break up the dead material into little parts. Physical methods that do this would be wind and water while biological methods include wildlife and other organisms. One special type of organism is called a fungus and they can take the dead material and turn into nutrients. Those nutrients are good for the soil so both animals and plants can have access to it.

Materials:

1. Clipboards
2. Work gloves (If they are available)
3. Dissecting sticks (small stick found on ground)
4. Worksheet (provided below)
5. Log

Procedure (30 Minutes Total)

1. Print out worksheet provided below before giving the lesson.
2. Have students find a log that is decomposing and can easily be reached.
3. Answer the questions on handout by examining the log using the dissecting sticks and while wearing the gloves.

4. After completing the handout, have the students return the log to its original state as much as possible.

Evaluation:

1. After finishing the lesson, students can be asked what does decomposition mean to you and what are the factors that affect decomposition.
2. Worksheets will be collected to check for completeness.

Activity Handout: Life on a Dead Log

Name _____

Date _____

1. Where on the property did you find this dead log?

2. Describe or draw a picture of the different types of plants that are now living off your log. (Think about where you found the log, are they aquatic, was the log from a dry area in the forest?)

3. List the different types of animals that are now living in or on your log.

4. Can you tell how old your log is? Estimate the age of your log and explain why you think so.

5. What are the plants and animals that live on the log doing to the log? Why is this important in nature?
