

BEFORE YOU VISIT THE GARDEN...

Lesson Ideas for Grade 4

Activity #2: Web of Life

Lesson Objective:

Students will understand the roles of plants and animals in the food chain. Students will be able to describe the living and nonliving components of an ecosystem necessary for survival.

Materials:

Food web cards—remove non-living components for this part (soil, air, rain, etc.) but keep 'sun' card.

Procedure:

1. Explain to students that the interconnectedness between animals (demonstrated in activity #1) is sometimes called a “food web,” and that animals depend on one another for survival.
2. Have students sit or stand in a close circle on the floor or playground.
3. Distribute an ecosystem card to each student (It's OK to have doubles of cards for large groups), retaining the *sun* card for the teacher. Explain that for this activity, they will represent the animal, plant or other item on their card.
4. Show the class your *sun* card. Ask students to raise their hand if they have something that depends on the sun for survival on their card (all plants should raise their hand). Holding one end of the ball of yarn, pass the ball to one of these students, directing them to *gently* hook the yarn in their index finger without pulling (You might have them wrap the yarn around their finger one time.) Have this student share his or her card, and explain why they (the plant) depends on the sun (e.g. the sunlight helps the plant make it's food).
5. Next, ask students who has a card representing something that depends on the plant, OR something that that the plant might depend on. The student holding the plant card can choose who will receive the yarn. The new student takes hold of the yarn, shows their card, and then explains the connection they have with the previous item (in this case, a plant).
6. Continue asking students to identify connections, have students pass the yarn to students (cards) that they depends on, OR students (cards) that depend on them. Continue the process until all students are holding on to a part of the yarn. Note that students may hold the yarn more than once, but all must hold it AT LEAST once. By the time every student has shown his or her card there should be a literal “web” of yarn inside the circle.

7. Explain to students how all living things on earth are connected, and depend on one another for survival. This activity shows how complicated the connections can be—these different connects are often referred to as a FOOD WEB. Direct all students with plant cards to *gently* tug on their strands of yarn. Ask students if they felt the pull. Again, remind students that even carnivorous animals depend on plants for survival.
8. If time permits, ask what would happen if someone removed a part of the food web. You can demonstrate this by asking one of the students to drop their yarn and back away from the circle. It's best to start with something small, or a plant. Instruct students that if they now have a loose end, they may not be able to survive. Tell them to drop their yarn, and back away. Eventually, the entire web will collapse.