

plants around the world 4-6

PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

Pre-visit Activity - School Yard Safari

Objectives: Students will learn and identify what habitats and biomes are and where they are found. Students will explore their schoolyard habitats to determine what plant and animal life exist.

Materials: Pencils, clipboard (or something students can bare down on), paper for writing/drawing, magnifying lens and camera to record plant/animal life (optional).

Getting Started: Generate discussion on habitats and biomes. Start off by asking the students to define what he or she thinks a habitat is? What makes up a habitat? What do the students think their habitat is? Share the definition of habitat with the students.

Habitat - The area or environment where an organism or ecological community normally lives or occurs. Ex: tree. Now that students have some idea of what a habitat is discuss what the word biome means? What is a biome? Where are they located? Has anyone ever visited a biome? Share the definition of biome with the students. **Biome** - The total complex of communities that make up a particular area or zone. Ex. Deciduous forest. If a world map is available, point out the areas where one would find biomes. **Africa** - deserts and grasslands, **South America**- rainforests, and **Alaska** -Taiga forest. Habitats together make up biomes. During your garden visit students will explore the rainforest, wetland, and desert biomes. The following activity will allow students to explore their schoolyard habitats.

Activity: Select areas around your school to explore. Divide the class into small groups. Each group should use the following tasks to conduct their investigations.

School Yard Safari Tasks

- What are the dominant plants in your habitat? Are there more trees than bushes? Are there any flowers blooming? Do grasses exist?
- List all the different species of plants you see. If you don't know their names draw a picture of the plant with a description.
- Look for signs of animals: tracks, homes, evidence of eating, pathways. What do these signs tell you about what lives here?
- Do you see any plants growing on man-made structures? Ex. Vines growing on buildings.
- Do you see any animal homes in human-built structures? Ex. Bird nest built in overhang of building.
- Lift a rock, move a twig, turn over a leaf. What do you see? (Be sure you put what you moved back the way you found it.)
- Use your sense of smell. What is the dominant smell in the area? What is it caused by? Is it natural or man-made?
- Be a bird-watcher: Where do you see them? What do they seem to be doing? How many different species do you see?



Wrap-up:

When groups have completed their schoolyard safari, find an area to sit in a circle as a group. Have each group share their findings with the rest of the class. Compare experiences, noting similarities and differences. Encourage students to share any drawings and descriptions they may have made with the rest of the class.

Post-visit Activity – Biome In A Box

Objectives: Students will construct a model of a biome, which will illustrate the various flora and fauna unique to that biome. Students will demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of habitats and biomes.

Materials: Cardboard box (larger than a shoe box), construction paper, glue, tape, markers, crayons, cups, raffia, paint, pencils, cardboard, pictures, photos, magazines and student's imaginations

Activity: Challenge groups of students to build a three dimensional biome in a box using everyday materials. Included in the model should be representative examples of flora and fauna, and it should show terrain (mountainous, flat, shoreline, etc.). The inside walls of the box should be decorated (painted, collaged with photos, etc.). Taped or glued onto one side of the box should be a written description of all of the characteristics of the biome (elevation, precipitation levels, temperature, flora, fauna, etc). Taped or glued onto the other side of the box is a world map indicating (by color, outline, etc.) the locations of this biome.

Extensions:

Creative writing-

- Choose a plant or animal in your biome of study that you might like to be. Write an autobiography about yourself as that organism in which you tell about your life history, interaction with other plants or animals, what foods you eat, where you can be found, etc. Include a description of your daily routine.

Educator Resources:

Books

Adult:

- Benyus, Janine M. HABITAT ECOLOGY, New York: Simon & Schuster, c1989
- Woods, Michael THE LIFE & MYSTERIES OF THE JUNGLE, New York: Crown Publishers, c1980

Children:

- Lepthien, Emilie U. WETLANDS. Chicago: Childrens Press, c1933.
- Dunphy, Madeleine. HERE IS THE SOUTHWESTERN DESERT. New York: Hyperion, c1995.
- Ruiz de Larramendi, Alberto. TROPICAL RAIN FORESTS OF CENTRAL AMERICA. Chicago: Childrens Press, c1993

