

Class Description

The class consists of 23 grade one students, nine of whom are boys, and fourteen girls. There is a good deal of ethnic diversity in the class, but no students with an ELL designation. There is one girl who requires more flexibility in the activities she participates in; she is academically advanced for her age, but has difficulty with social interaction. She can easily become disinterested in activities, especially those she can complete quickly with minimal effort, and will impulsively pursue other interests in spite of what the rest of the class is working on (eg. she will abruptly get up and walk away in the middle of read-aloud to go play with some math manipulatives). This behaviour doesn't seem to cause too many problems, as it appears to be self-regulatory and does not disrupt the other students, as there seems to be an understanding by the other students that she has different needs. This girl I also taken out of class at times to work with the resource teacher. The other students, while each unique in their interests and needs, do not require special considerations in the same manner as this particular girl.

The students tend to be fairly high-energy, and can easily become distracted during teacher-talking times, but can become engaged in classroom activities they are more active participants in (eg. handing out papers, writing, drawing, creating art). The students have good classroom stewardship and for the most part take care of their classroom; they tuck in chairs, know how to collect and hand in forms, and care about work posted on wall. They do require prompting for certain routines like cleaning up or changing out of their outside shoes. During lessons, the students make good connections during read-alouds, and ask interesting, reflective questions.

The students already know how to use technology like the smart board quite well, and they enjoy singing songs. They don't seem to enjoy routine desk work like spelling tests (but they do like to brag about their ability to spell words correctly). As for the physical space of the classroom itself, There is lots of space and good wall coverage with student work. There are two carpet areas with individual spaces to sit on. The children in division 14 are strong communicators, and are active contributors to classroom activities, especially those using technology like the smart board or are hands-on activities like sculpting with plasticine. The class is by no means a quiet one, however the students overall seem energized by being in the classroom; they are also complete characters and are delightful to work with.

Overview

At Hamilton I taught four lessons as part of a unit on the rainforest to a grade one class. Initially, I had several questions about teaching this new group of students. Only having had one day to get to know these new students, I wondered how I would be able to adapt lessons on the fly in order to accommodate their different needs, as it was impossible to develop an understanding of their diverse needs in just one day. I also wondered what would be appropriate to expect in terms of student learning, given so little time to work with these kids. I imagine these are questions I will revisit if I have the opportunity to teach on call.

I had several personal goals and several goals for my students going into the Hamilton Experience. For myself, my main goal was to facilitate the students learning as well as having fun. My second goal was to create lessons that were practical in terms of resources and time, yet still engaged learners in a variety of learning styles and intelligences. For students, my goal was to have them become genuinely, intrinsically motivated to participate in the activities I provided for them. I also wanted them to learn some real content; my main objective was to get them to develop a sensory (visual, auditory, and tactile) as well as academic understanding of the four layers of the rainforest. Students participated in a listen-and-draw activity, a nature walk, and the creation of their own immersive rainforest environment within their classroom with a wall mural and paper crafted vines hanging from the ceiling.

I attempted to link activities to the following PLOs:

- identify characteristics of different environments (Social Studies)
- demonstrate responsible behaviour in caring for their immediate and school environments (Social Studies)
- classify living and non-living things (Science)
- communicate their observations, experiences, and thinking in a variety of ways (Science)
- describe the basic needs of local plants and animals (Science)
- experiment with a variety of materials, technologies, and processes to make images (Art)

Though I did not perform any formal recorded assessments of the students' work, my lessons were structured in such a way that I would be able to make formative assessments of the students by collecting and marking their work. For the tangible work done by the students (the nature walk graphic organizer, the rainforest four-layers drawing, and the vine craft) or any summative assessment of learning, I would use a five-point grading system where 5 represents exceeding expectations, 4 represents fully meeting expectations, 3 represents approaching expectations, 2 represents not meeting expectations, and 1 represents incomplete (the assignment is missing key components, or has not been handed in entirely; this would contain a "see me later" caveat). Assessment for learning took place throughout my lessons; I changed my lesson plans based on how much students had shown me they had learned. For example, having learned of my students capacities for engaging in auditory and tactile learning while on the nature walk, I followed up with the multimodal listening and drawing activity to further encourage them to use more than just their visual sense to interpret information.

Lessons

Grade 1 Rainforest Lesson 1: "Nature Walk" (2 x 45 mins)

Objectives: Students will be able to participate in a Nature Walk, and as a follow-up activity fill in a graphic organizer with information about what they encountered.

Assessment

Students will be able to successfully name living and non-living things that they observed during the nature walk and record them on a graphic organizer.

PLOs:

- classify living and non-living things (Science)
- identify characteristics of different environments (Social Studies)

Materials

- Depending on weather: Jacket, rain boots / outdoor shoes, hat, umbrella
- a graphic organiser (T-Chart for listing "Living" and "Non-living" things seen on the nature walk) - one for each student
- whiteboard / black board / Chart paper
- whiteboard markers / chalk / markers

Introduction/Hook (5 mins)

Introduce the class to the activity: "Today we are going to go on a nature walk to the park beside the school. Could someone tell me what that park is called?" If no one answers, then say "It is the Hamilton Community Park!" The teacher(s) will ask the following: "Has anyone been on the trail in the park before?" If yes, ask the following question: "Have you looked closely at the park, looking at the very small things?" (This is to see how much detail the learners are able to see in their daily lives). "While we go on this walk, pay close attention to the little details and keep in your head the idea of what is living and non-living in the park. Remember what belongs and does not belong in the park naturally."

Procedure:

- "The teachers will go through safety procedures before going on the nature walk: **(10 mins)**

"When we are outside of the classroom, we will be using the buddy system. Stay with your buddy at all times and please do not leave the group. We will move as a group and learn as a group! We will be using our senses, but can someone tell me what are the five senses? (If no one

answers, then provide the answer: “the five senses are taste, touch, smell, see, and hear”) Today for the walk, we will only be using three of the five senses: smell, see, and hear. We will NOT be tasting or touching anything so please keep your hands by your side at all times! We will be staying on the path so please do not walk out of the path and remember to stay with the group!” The teachers will also give time for students to prepare for the walk (if rain: prepare boots, raincoats, and umbrellas; if clear skies: warm jacket, outdoor shoes, and optional gloves and hats)

- The teachers will take the students on a guided tour of the park, utilising the natural and unnatural environment. **(30 mins)**

Along the trail, the educator may stop at certain points to show the pond (which may contain garbage, sewage and/or oil slick, all part of the non-living world), point out the trees (living), smell the air (which may be gasoline filled as part of the non-living), listen for birds (living), the cars (non-living), the highway (non-living), the bridge (non-living), the trail itself (non-living), the dirt (non-living), the grass (living), plants (living), moss (living), rocks (non-living), and anything else that the learners or the educators see along the path. The tour will go along the trail, leading back to the other side of the school and returning to the classroom. Along the trail, anything that the educator and learners see may be part of discussion of the living and non-living. After the nature walk, the students will be separated into groups (optional, if time allows) to de-brief.

- After recess (second block), students will complete a follow-up activity: **(45 mins)**

A graphic organiser categorising the living and non-living things that were noticed during the nature walk will be handed out to each student. As a group, the students will discuss and write down the things (listed above in #3) in the correct category. The students will be able to share their thoughts and their own observations to the group. students should have the same notes written in the graphic organiser provided

Closure

“As we near the end of today’s lesson, keep in mind today’s nature walk and be prepared to think and compare what is the same or similar and what is different to rainforests.”

Adaptations/Extensions

If the students finish the graphic organiser early, they will be able to use the back of the sheet to draw what they during the nature walk. If the students are unable to spell or write the words during the writing activity, they will be able to draw the objects named.

Grade 1 Rainforest Lesson 2: "Listen and Draw" (25-45 mins)

Objectives: Students will be able to listen to rainforest sounds and draw what they think they hear.

Assessment: Students will be expected to complete an interpretive rainforest drawing based on sounds they hear from a recording.

PLOs:

- communicate their observations, experiences, and thinking in a variety of ways (Science)
- identify characteristics of different environments (Social Studies)

Materials:

- paper (1 sheet per student)
- pencils
- tablet for listening to rainforest sounds (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZc94cO54kY>)

Introduction/Hook: (5 mins)

In the separate room, students will find a comfortable place to sit. The teacher will ask them to close their eyes and remember the nature walk from last week. The teacher will ask the students to remember what they experienced using the three senses of sight, hearing and smell.

Procedure: (15-20 mins)

The teacher will hand out the paper and drawing materials. Activity is explained: the students will listen to a recording of rainforest sounds, and attempt to draw what they hear. They will be reminded that some things that they should include in their drawings will not necessarily be heard (eg. plant life like trees, bushes, and vines). Students will be encouraged to draw things where they think they might be found in the rainforest (eg. birds and monkeys in trees, insects in bushes, etc.). The teacher will show the children a rough drawing he or she has made to demonstrate. The teacher will then play the recording, and students will try to draw what they hear.

Closing: (5-20 mins, depending on the block)

Students will be prompted to fold their papers in half on a horizontal axis, and then fold the same way again. This should divide their papers into four equal rows, roughly corresponding to the layers of the rainforest. If time allows (ie. for the first group), students will then be asked inquiry questions by the teacher: "what did you draw?", "was there anything you heard that you couldn't identify?" "is there anything you expected to hear but didn't?", "why did I ask you to fold your papers?". Students will share their answers with a partner.

Adaptations/Extensions:

If any students have trouble hearing the recording, time should allow for it to be played at least twice; students can also be encouraged to use their imaginations when drawing.

Grade 1 Rainforest Lesson 3: "Layers of the Rainforest" (45 mins)

Objectives: Students will be able to identify the four layers of the rainforest, and will understand the unique characteristics of each layer.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate their knowledge by writing the names of the layers on the appropriate section of the rainforest drawings they made last day, as well as a one sentence description of each layer.

PLOs:

- describe the basic needs of local plants and animals (Science)
- identify characteristics of different environments (Social Studies)

Materials:

Book: *Rain Forests* by Nancy Smiler Levinson, the students rainforest drawings, pencils, erasers, pencil crayons

Introduction/Hook: (5 mins)

The teacher will ask students to recall what they did last class, and if they remember why they folded their rainforest drawings into four sections.

Procedure: (30 mins)

The teacher will read *Rain Forests* aloud to the students, pausing occasionally for questions or comments; special attention will be paid to the four layers of the rainforest. The teacher will then hand back the drawings the students worked on last class, and students will add the information about the four layers to the back of their drawing, following an example created by the teacher on the board.

Closing: (10 mins)

After completing the writing task, the students can continue to add detail and colour to their drawings.

Adaptations/Extensions:

Students who finish the writing task early can spend more time on their drawings, for example adding new animals they have just learned about. Students who have difficulty with the writing will have the teacher's example to follow.

Grade 1 Rainforest Lesson 4: "Vine Craft" (50 mins)

Objectives: Students will be able to create an artistic representation of a vine and flowers, typical of those found in the rainforest.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate their ability to follow instructions by cutting out the vine and making at least two flowers out of tissue paper.

PLOs:

- A3: experiment with a variety of materials, technologies, and processes to make images (Art)
- identify characteristics of different environments (Social Studies)
- demonstrate responsible behaviour in caring for their immediate and school environments (Social Studies)

Materials:

- construction paper with spiral cut-out pattern
- various colours of tissue paper
- flower stencils
- scissors
- glue

Introduction/Hook: (2 mins)

The teacher will show the students an example of a completed vine craft.

Procedure: (30 - 35 mins)

The teacher will first talk about proper use of materials, emphasizing that students not waste any paper, as it is made from trees like those found in the rainforest. The teacher will then go through the step-by-step instructions for how to cut out the vine, trace the flower shapes on the tissue paper and cut them out, and glue the flowers on to the vine. The students will then work on the craft themselves.

Closing: (15 mins)

After completing the vine craft, students will clean up the areas they used to work, and will make sure to dispose of any unusable scrap paper in the proper recycling bin or garbage, as well as returning any borrowed materials like scissors and glue. If time permits, Students can hang their vines on the rainforest wall.

Adaptations/Extensions:

Students are welcome to make more than two flowers if they finish early; they are also not required to use the stencils if they would prefer to design their own flower shapes.

Resource Critique

For my project plan I consulted and made use of several books as well as other forms of media. The two books I derived information from in order to teach my lessons were *Layers of the Rainforest* by Shirley Najhram and *Rain Forests* by Nancy Smiler Levinson; both of which were borrowed from the education library at the University of British Columbia. I ended up not using *Layers* for my read-aloud because I felt it was too text-heavy compared to *Rain Forests*, but in retrospect, it may have been the better choice; *Layers* is written in prose with rhyming couplets, which may have been more interesting for my students when read aloud. Though *Rain Forests* discussed the four layers of the rainforest using overall simpler language, it had additional information I consider somewhat superfluous. Also, my students struggled more than I expected to pay attention during the read-aloud, and perhaps a more rhythmic reading would have better engaged them. In retrospect, I would have used *Layers* instead of *Rain Forests*.

I also used a YouTube video, which was essentially a recording of rainforest sounds, for my listen-and-draw lesson. I went through several different videos to try and find the most useful one, and "Jungle Sounds" was the best because it featured a variety of animal sounds such as birds and monkeys, as well as the constant buzzing of insects and rustling of wind through the trees, which are important details for a rainforest drawing. I found the recording to be interesting and at times surprising, and it seemed to keep the students engaged throughout the lesson.

For the nature walk, another teacher candidate and I collaborated on a graphic organizer which was used by the students to differentiate between living and non-living things. The graphic organizer worked well for helping the students organize things they had seen on the nature walk, the students required a great deal of assistance in spelling small words like "bird" and "tree", so a better approach might have been to make the organizer more art-based, where the students would have drawn the appropriate objects next to words already provided for them.

The resources I used during my final lesson consisted of the craft materials provided by the teacher and found in the art supply room at Hamilton. I was provided with exactly what I needed to teach the vine craft lesson, and I am grateful to Hamilton for those resources.

Name:

Date:

What I Saw on the Nature Walk

Living	Non-living

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