

1st Grade Plants and Animals Unit

Unit Overview

The Plants and Animals unit, taught using STC *Organisms*, provides students opportunities to investigate plants and animals. Students observe a variety of land and aquatic plants and animals. They compare and contrast the organisms and learn about the basic needs of living things. Throughout the unit, students discuss and model good scientific practices, especially observation and communication skills.

Essential Questions:

1. What are the basic needs of plants, animals, and humans?
2. How are plants, animals, and humans alike and different?
3. What are good scientific practices?

Unit Questions:

1. How can we learn about living things around us?
2. What are some ways living things change?
3. How can observations be made more accurate?
4. What are some ways to describe objects?
5. Why is it important to keep accurate records or notes about things that are observed?
6. How can tools help us learn more about living things?

Lesson Summary (Pages 3-4 in STC *Organisms* Teacher's Guide)

Lesson 1: The first lesson gets student thinking about what living things need to live and be healthy and about the ways all plants and animals are alike and different. A pre-unit assessment lesson, it provides you with a sense of students' present thinking about the unit's central themes.

Lessons 2 and 3: [These] lessons introduce students to the first organism they will study: plants they grow from seeds. Students create an observing table, a tool that helps them sharpen their observation skills.

Lessons 4 and 5: ...Student groups set up woodland terraria with moss and young conifer trees in Lesson 4 and freshwater aquaria with *Elodea* and *Cabomba* in Lesson 5. Establishing the process they will use throughout the unit, students observe, record, discuss, and compare features of the two woodland plants and then the two freshwater plants.

Lesson 6: Students return to the seeds they have planted, observed, and cared for over a period of time. Here, for the first time, they focus on growth and change in an organism,

discuss what plants need to live, and create their own readers that capture their experiences about growing plants from seeds.

Lessons 7 through 10: To expand the class's understanding of the diversity of life, Lessons 7 through 10 introduce four animals: freshwater snails and guppies for the aquaria, and pill bugs and millipedes for the terraria. By adding these animals to the two environments, students begin to notice not only that plants coexist with animals but also that animals coexist with other animals.

Lessons 11 and 12: [These lessons] reinforce the class's emerging awareness that living things grow and change.

Lessons 13 through 15: [These lessons] help students move from the specific to the general, forming their own ideas about the ways plants and animals are alike and different.

Lesson 16: Students are ready to apply what they have learned about organisms to the one organism in the classroom they have not yet discussed: themselves. How are we like other organisms? How are we different?