

WHO IS LIVING IN OUR DIRT?

Focus Lesson: Who is Living in Our Dirt?

Materials:

Dirt by Steve “The Dirtmeister” Tomecek
The Life and Times of the Ant by Charles Micucci
Wiggling Worms at Work by Wendy Pfeffer
A Handful of Dirt by Raymond Bial
What Do Roots Do? by Kathleen V. Kudlinski
One Small Square: Backyard by Donald Silver
 Brown butcher paper or poster board
 Paper
 Markers
 Colored pencils

Time: 2-3 45 minute periods

***Common Core Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Thinking Skill:

Researching
 Note taking

Objective:

Students will research in small groups to create a class-wide visual presentation of how soil is made and who lives in soil.

Connection:

Students will see that there are many living creatures coexisting beneath their feet.

Explicit Instruction:

1. Ask students to describe dirt.
2. Is dirt the same as soil?
3. What is soil made of?
4. What lives in soil?
5. Generate a class definition of soil and a list of all the things found in soil. Accept all answers.
6. Read *Dirt* by Steve Tomacek. Tell older students the cartoon drawings help younger children understand the concepts about soil.
7. Ask students to jot down important terms and simple definitions. Do not reread definitions. Encourage students to use their own words and to draw simple cartoon sketches.
8. Tell students they will be doing their own small group investigations of soil. What is soil made of? What lives in soil? How does soil decompose?
9. They will use books to research what is living in soil and will create a class mural for display. Using pictures and facts, they will work as a team to present their findings. They should pick out the most interesting and important facts from the books they are given to describe soil and the diverse organisms that live in it. They will also draw diagrams and pictures to illustrate their findings of the places and spaces in which these organisms live.

Guided Practice:

Break students into 5 groups and give each group a book.

Monitor groups to make sure students are working together and all students are on task. Students should generate labeled illustrations, diagrams, and definitions to add to the class mural from what they have found in their books about what lives in the dirt. Using *Dirt* as a model students can use cartoon style illustrations to present their information.

Once they have checked their work with the teacher and made final copies each group can add their facts and pictures to the mural so that the brown paper is full of their work.

Independent Practice:

Students will reflect independently on the most interesting process or concept learned from the book their group worked with. Additionally, students can reflect on how they worked with their group, did they contribute fairly? What could they do to be a better group mate next time there is group work?

Reflection – Group Share:

Once all groups work has been added to the mural bring the class together and allow each group to present their work to the class.

Have some students share what they thought was the most interesting information that another group presented. These ‘shares’ can be written on strips of paper and then read to the class after the presentations.

Reading list:

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Teacher Note: