

An Introduction to the Fifth Grade Botany Block: Day One

A suggestion for teachers by Janet Langley

(Genesis: On the third Day)

And God said: "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good."

Over much of the earth there is spread a wonderful carpet of green. If like Nils we were able to fly upon a swan's back from San Francisco to Cedar Springs, we would see the bright green grass that flows through Golden Gate Park, ringed by the darker greens of hundreds of trees. The coastal range would glisten with its golden straw colored grasses blowing in the wind and the Central Valley would look like a patchwork quilt of light and dark greens, browns and golds, reflecting the various fields of corn, wheat, vegetables, and other foods that are grown there. Next, we would find ourselves above Sacramento, where we would follow the American River as it winds its way through a maze of trees and meadows covered with vines and flowers. Then on we would fly up towards Placerville, the dark green live oaks below us a deep contrast against the background of dried grasses. Upon arriving at Cedar Springs, we would find ourselves surrounded by a profusion of trees and plants, many of them planted by previous 5th grades.

Even before the animals and certainly before man, The Old Testament tells us that God created the world of the plants.

Why do you think they came first? Why are they important, what gifts does the plant world bring to the earth and its inhabitants? *Shelter, food, clothing, shade, beauty, oxygen, medicines...*

Look around our room; where can we find the gifts of the plant world? What uses?

As we discussed last year, the plant is a living, breathing, growing thing. When we look at the rhythm of our life, we find that people breathe or move

out into the world when they are awake and then breathe in or retreat from the world when they sleep. The plant world also has a waking, breathing out time and a sleeping, withdrawing time, but what we do in a day, the plant takes a year to do. The plant spends the winter breathing in, withdrawing from the outer world and then with the coming of spring and summer it breathes out into the world of the sun in the form of blossom, leaf, stem and flower.

As we think back to our discussion last year of how we are different from the plant world, what did we discover? (*This from our discussion leading into the "Human being and animal" block of the difference between humans, animals, minerals and plants.*)

Plants are rooted in one place, they are silent and cannot speak, they cannot discuss things with each other, they are not able to decide what they will or will not do. You can decide what you wish to study and become when you grow up- you could decide to be a fire fighter, an artist, a computer programmer or a teacher or whatever is your dream. But, plants have no choice, an acorn cannot grow up to be a willow, or a rose a tulip. They come into the world, their direction preordained. However, whether or not they are able to fulfill their destiny depends on certain factors. What could affect a plant's growth? Soil, light, rain, weather, humans ...

Perhaps more than any other living thing, the cycles of the year work on the plant. *Refer to board drawing of the seasons of the plant.*

Finish with the story of The Man Who Planted Trees by Giono

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