

RIPARIAN METAPHORS

Overview

Students make comparisons between unrelated objects through metaphors to learn the functions of a riparian habitat.

Time

20-30 minutes

Grades

2-6

Materials

Items to use for the metaphors: baby food jar, strainer, coffee filter, soap, sponge, pillow, picture of a house, grocery cart, postcard, and a bag to store all the items

Introduction

- Using the information provided in the *Background of Riparian Areas and Invasive Species* page, discuss with students the ways in which riparian habitat provides unique habitat for a great diversity of plants and animals.
- Define what the word riparian means and brainstorm why these areas are important – ask students if they have ever been to a riparian area before and what they remember about them.
- Discuss riparian functions and the meaning of metaphor with the class. A *metaphor is a direct comparison between two things. It gives a vivid image through direct (that is without using the terms “like” or “such as”) comparison. “A tree is a home,” “books are windows of thought,” and “she is a tower of strength” are examples of metaphors.*
- Tell students that objects can be used to represent riparian functions.

Activity

- Now bring out the Mystery Metaphor Bag. Tell the students that everything in the bag can be a metaphor that relates to the functions of riparian areas.
 - Divide the class into different groups (based on however many objects you have in your metaphor bag) and have a representative from each group draw an object from the bag.
 - When each group has an object, ask them to spend the next few minutes brainstorming what ecosystem service their object represents in a riparian area.
- Encourage the students to build on each other’s ideas. Allow each group enough time to discuss its ideas before presenting them to the class.
 - Each group should then share what they think their object represents to the class while you explain in more detail the metaphor for each.
 - Ask them if their own attitudes about wetlands are different as a result of doing this activity. If so, how?

Materials	Metaphor
Baby food jar	Riparian areas act as a nursery – they are critical breeding habitat for many wildlife and provide a place for wildlife to raise their young
Strainer	Riparian areas strain silt, debris, and pollutants like construction runoff from water
Coffee filter	Riparian areas filter smaller impurities from the water like excess nutrients, toxins, pharmaceuticals
Soap	Riparian areas help purify the environment – plant roots absorb chemicals and sewage that would otherwise go into the river
Sponge	During heavy rains and spring when runoff water is high, riparian plants absorb extra water in its roots and helps to prevent flooding into local communities
Pillow	Riparian habitat provides a resting place for wildlife like migratory birds
House	Riparian habitat provides shelter for wildlife
Picture of multiple houses	Healthy riparian habitat contains a diverse number of plants; these plants provide many different types of shelter for wildlife
Toy grocery cart	Diverse plants provide diverse and nutrient-rich food for wildlife
Postcard	Riparian habitats act as summer and/or wintering habitat for many animals who are just visiting (e.g. migrating birds)

