



Keep It Simple

Newport Elementary School, California

Topic: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Practice: Foundational Skills

A teacher at Newport Elementary School uses this worksheet to reinforce a basic sentence construction rule (i.e., sentences require a subject and verb) in the context of a unit on Ecosystems. The lesson begins with the teacher reading *Worms Wiggle* by David Pelham and Michael Foreman and asking students what they noticed. Invariably, students notice the subject/verb sentence pattern throughout the book, such as "Frogs leap." Students then use this worksheet to build their own simple sentences using the vocabulary of the Ecosystems unit.

The sample here includes a thematically related poem that students created using their noun/verb pairs. As a follow up, the teacher has students pick one of the simple sentences to serve as the central focus of an expository paragraph.

To learn more about teaching students to construct sentences, listen to the audio interview *Learning to Construct Effective Sentences* to hear a sixth-grade teacher explain how she helps students understand sentence construction through mentor texts.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-PEP-11-C-0068. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



Keep It Simple

With a partner, list all the people, places, things, and ideas (nouns) you can think of that deal with our Ecosystem unit. Write each word on a line in the first column.

NOUNS	VERBS

Now think of an action (verb) that each of your nouns can do, perform, etc. Write the verb in the column next to the noun.

Challenge: Use your list to create a simple sentence poem about Ecosystems or some subset of ecosystems (i.e., food web, energy transfer, populations, etc.)



A sample student poem created during this lesson can be found below. The poem is the result of three student pairs merging their simple sentences and selecting the ones they felt were most appropriate. This group decided to have their poem rhyme.

The Circle of Life

Energy radiates.

Raindrops fall.

Seeds sprout.

Earthworms crawl.

Trees mature.

Plants grow.

Bees buzz.

Flowers show.

Bunnies nibble.

Mice chew.

Chickens peck.

Cows moo.

Owls soar.

Wolves track.

Lions stalk.

Predators attack.

Cougar eats.

Rabbit dies.

Energy transfers.

Nature sighs.