

# Habitat Connections

Students will become more familiar with each other and their local habitat

**Engage**

## Supplemental Reading

*Step Into the Forest*

By Howard Rice

*Bridge to Terabithia*

By Katherine Paterson

### Grade Levels:

3, 4, 5

### Curriculum Correlation:

NCSCS—Science

3.L.2.2, 4.L.1.1, 5.L.2.2, 5.L.2.3

### Materials:

None

### Duration:

20 minutes

### Location:

Large indoor classroom space; Outdoor Study Area preferred

## Procedure:

1. Have the students hold hands to make a circle. Walk around the circle, first naming one student as plant or animal of the schoolyard habitat (robin, worm, blue jay, squirrel, oak tree). Name the next four students in the circle as food, water, shelter, and space for that animal. Repeat the process until all the students are involved. When all students have been designated as a plant, animal, or a habitat component, comment on the fact that they are holding hands and that it represents the idea that all things in a habitat are **interrelated**.
2. Next, tell the students to slowly turn to the right to look at the back of the head of the person in front of them. Then have them take one side step toward the center of the circle. Ideally they will be standing close together in order for the activity to work best, but if they don't feel comfortable enough to be close in the first round, you can discuss the benefit of standing closer during the processing of the activity and they can try again.
3. Once they are placed, have them put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. The next step is very important so make sure you have everyone's attention: they will need to slowly sit down on the knees of the student behind them, but they'll also need to keep their own knees together to make a chair for the student in front of them. Tell them you will countdown from three to make sure everyone moves at the same time. If the circle can remain intact, they are representing the **interdependence** of elements in a habitat.
4. Settle the group and have them sit on the ground. Remind the students of when they noticed all elements of the ecosystem were interrelated when they were holding hands. How was it the same or different from when they had to try supporting each other? Help them come to a better understanding of the connection and balance between food, water, shelter, and space for any living thing's survival in its habitat.

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5. Let them try the activity again. This time ask them to hold the posture. As they are representing an animal/plant, food, water, shelter, and space – identify a student who represents water. Tell the group, “It is a drought year and the water supply is reduced.” Then have the student remove themselves from the lap-sit circle. At this point the circle will either collapse or suffer from some other disruption. Other ways you can illustrate varying conditions:

- Remove a student because of pollution of the water supply.
- Remove two students because of forest fires limiting shelter and space.
- Remove a student or students because of urban development, limiting the availability of all habitat components.

6. Ask the students to discuss what this activity means to them. Ask them to summarize the main things they have learned. This could include:

- Food, water, shelter, and space in an appropriate arrangement can be called a habitat.
- Humans and other living things depend on habitat.
- Loss of any elements of habitat influences the **biotic factors** living there.

## Variation:

1. As you are naming students as a plant or animal in the habitat, assign them in the order of a food chain. When you discuss interrelationships, see if any of them realize that *they* are food or shelter for another living thing.

Suggestion: Dogwood tree, cardinal, black rat snake, red-tailed hawk, worm, mushroom.

2. Instead of the lap sit, the food chain could be mixed into the circle out of order. The students can pass a ball of string around to each other to make connections and form a visual food web.

## Learning Targets:

1. Identify the components of a habitat.
2. Recognize how humans and other living things depend upon habitats.
3. Interpret the significance of loss or change in a habitat.