

Human Adaptations

Grades: 7 and 8

Length: 50 minutes

South Dakota Content Standards

- ◆ 7th Grade Life Science: 7, 11, and 12
- ◆ 8th Grade Life Science: 10, 12, 13 and 14

National Science Standards

- ◆ 5th through 8th: C

Objective

Creatively reconstruct the human body to be adapted for the prairie habitat.

Method

Creative writing

Background

In this amusing activity, students will be able to imagine how humans have and could better adapt to prairie life. The purpose of this activity is to get the students thinking further about adaptation, and at the same time, apply it (in a silly way) to their own lives.

Vocabulary

Adaptation

Materials

- ◆ Paper
- ◆ Pencil
- ◆ Imagination

Procedure

1. Plants have specific aspects that help them live on the prairie. So do animals. Brainstorm and discuss the adaptations that humans have made to live on the prairie.
2. Talk about what kinds of adaptations they would like to have for prairie living. Perhaps (as teens) they might want thick hair that doesn't get messed up in the wind, or well-hydrated skin. Note: they CANNOT change the prairie environment, only the human body.
3. Shift the discussion to imagining what it would be like if humans did not build homes on the prairie, but lived more like the animals. How would humans adapt to living in a prairie habitat, completely exposed to the elements? For instance, would they have incredibly thick skin so as to shield them from the fierce winds? Would they have to run fast to avoid predators? Would their homes be underground?
4. After brainstorming, have the students write what human adaptations they believe would be needed in order to survive life on the prairie. Have them use their imaginations!
5. When time is up, collect all the papers, shuffle them around, and without reading the names of the students, randomly select papers to read. This activity is intended to get them thinking about the absurd - laughter should be a part of the final reading.

Extension

Encourage the students to use the ideas generated during this activity to create a short story about human life on the prairie.

Additional Information

National Park Service - www.nps.gov

Information on all of America's National Parks. Includes a special section for students and teachers.

Views of the National Parks - www2.nature.nps.gov/views

Virtual experiences of national parks and knowledge centers on various natural resource themes.

National Park Service Web Rangers - www.nps.gov/webrangers

Kids can become Junior Rangers from their home or school.