

Sensual Soil

Description

Students use most of their senses to discover soil in this science/language-arts activity.

Objective

To compare a variety of soils with the senses.



Teacher Background

People often mask many of their sensory experiences, focusing only on the visual. In this activity, students are challenged to discover different types of soil using most of their senses, and describe it using words related to these senses.

Materials

- Four containers with different types of soil: clay, compost, garden soil, sand
- Scrap paper or sticky-notes
- Four lunch-size paper bags
- Four large pieces of construction paper
- Colored markers

Preparation

Set out four containers of soil. Set paper scraps from empty paper bags and pens next to the containers.

Action

1. Divide your class into four equal-sized groups of students.
2. Tell the students you will be exploring four different types of mystery soil and using words to describe them. Explain that they will be using all of their senses except for one...taste!
3. Give each group one container of soil, one bag, a marker and a pile of sticky notes or pieces of scrap paper.
4. Ask your students to keep a lid on their containers and have them shake the containers and listen.
5. Now have them open the containers slowly and allow them to touch the soil with their fingers, exploring the soil texture.
6. Invite the students to hold the containers up to their noses to smell the soil.
7. Ask them to take a close look at the soil. They can also rub a bit on some paper and look at the color it leaves.
8. Now have each student share one word about their soil, based on one of their senses. Have them record their word on a sticky note or piece of scrap paper and place their word into the bag at their station.
9. Once all students are finished writing a word about their soil, have them leave all the materials at the station and rotate to the next container of soil. Repeat until all students have rotated through the four stations.
10. After the students have experienced all four soils, explain that the groups will now use all of the words left in the bag to create a poem about their type of soil.
11. Have each group open their bag and take out all the words inside. They can spread these words over a large piece of chart paper and move them around until their poem has a pleasing sound. They must use every word, no matter how often it appears. Ask them to give the poem a title.
12. Once each group has prepared a poem, have them practice reading it. When they are ready, have each group present their poem to the class. The class can then try to guess which soil the group is describing.

Wrap Up

Which soil had the strongest smell? Which felt the weirdest? Which felt smooth and slippery? Which felt gritty and coarse? Which made the loudest sound? Which two were most alike? What did you learn about soils from this activity?

