

# Unit 6A Interdependence and adaptation

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children extend their knowledge of the way in which plants and animals in different habitats depend upon each other and are suited to their environment. They relate feeding relationships to knowledge of plant nutrition.

Experimental and investigative work focuses on:

- making careful observations and measurements
- using results to draw conclusions and suggesting explanations for these using scientific knowledge and understanding.

Work in this unit also offers children opportunities to explain feeding relationships in a habitat in terms of scientific knowledge and understanding and to consider ways in which the living things and the environment need protection.

This unit takes approximately 12 hours.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

Builds on Unit 3B 'Helping plants grow well', Unit 4B 'Habitats' and Unit 5A

'Keeping healthy'

**Children need:**

- to be familiar with the ideas of habitats and feeding relationships
- to know what plants need in order to grow well.

Links with Units 3D, 3F, 5B, 5C, 6D and geography.

## VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have opportunities to use:

- words relating to plant growth  
*eg fertiliser, nutrients*
- words and phrases relating to feeding relationships *eg consumer, producer, predator, prey, food chain*
- words which have different meanings in other contexts  
*eg fertiliser, consumer, producer, key, suited, plant food*
- expressions for summarising and generalising.

## RESOURCES

- plant kept in the dark for one to two weeks
- secondary sources *eg video, CD-ROM* showing plant growing in time-lapse
- labels from house and garden plants
- packaging from fertilisers and 'plant food'
- information card about animals in local habitat
- soil samples
- hand lenses/microscopes
- examples of plants with different types of root or pictures showing plant roots
- secondary sources *eg reference books, video* showing a different, possibly non-local habitat

## EXPECTATIONS

**at the end of this unit**

*most children will:*

recognise that a green plant needs light and water to grow well and that it produces new material from air and water; describe how animals in two habitats are suited to the conditions; represent feeding relationships in food chains beginning with a green plant and use keys to identify animals and plants

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

recognise that a green plant needs light and water to grow well, that different animals and plants live in different habitats, and that some animals feed on other animals and some on plants; use keys to identify some animals and plants

*some children will have progressed further and will also:*

recognise that green plants are the source of food for all animals and that they produce material for new growth from air and water in the presence of light

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**POINTS TO NOTE**

Review what children remember about what plants need in order to grow well. It may be helpful to stimulate their thoughts by showing them a green plant that has been kept in the dark for several weeks and a healthy plant as contrast. Question children about the plant, if necessary prompting them to identify light, water and warmth and healthy stems, roots and leaves as necessary for plants to grow well.

Plants kept in the dark for too long a period may not recover.  
The ideas on which this unit builds are found in several earlier units. Teachers will need to use what this activity shows about children's understanding in their short-term planning for later activities.

**CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN**

- that green plants need light in order to grow well
- to make careful observations of plant growth and to explain these using simple scientific knowledge and understanding
- that green plants make new plant material using air, water in the presence of light
- that for this to take place the green plant requires leaves

- ◆ Ask children to suggest what will happen to the plant kept in the dark if it is placed on the window sill for a few days. Ask children to observe the plant to see whether it grows better *eg becomes more sturdy, develops more leaves*. If possible show time-lapse pictures *eg on video, CD-ROM* to illustrate how plants grow and make new stems, leaves etc. Discuss with children what they have seen and explain that plants grow by making new materials using the air around them and the water they take in through their roots, and that they need leaves to do this.

**CHILDREN**

- recognise that the plant will grow healthily once it is returned to the light by making a prediction *eg its leaves will turn green and it will begin to grow stronger after a few days*
- make relevant observations which provide information about how the plant is growing

It is not necessary at this stage to introduce the term 'photosynthesis'.  
Plants which have leaves which are not green *eg copper beech* contain green chlorophyll.  
Children often think that plants require soil in order to grow. It may be helpful to point out that some substances found in soil are needed for healthy plant growth but that soil itself is not essential.

- that fertilisers are often added to soils to provide plants with the nutrients they need

- ◆ Show children some packaging from fertilisers or 'plant food' or labels from house or garden plants and ask them to suggest why fertilisers are needed. Explain that plants take in nutrients as well as water through their roots but that very small quantities of these are needed. Ask children to think about how animals obtain food for growth and discuss the differences between this life process in plants and animals.

- state that plants and animals obtain food for growth in different ways

 **SAFETY** – Children should not handle plant fertiliser.

- to use keys to identify animals and plants in a local habitat

- ◆ Ask children what they remember of the local habitats studied in Year 4 and revisit one specific habitat. Observe animals and plants found in these and help children to use keys to identify unfamiliar animals and plants from living things, or from pictures.

- use a suitable key to identify a number of plants and animals found in a local habitat

If animals are brought into the classroom, ensure that they are treated sensitively and their needs met and that they are returned to the habitat from which they came as soon as possible.  
Children can develop keys using suitable IT software (see IT Unit 4C 'Branching databases').  
When children use keys they may group living things *eg as molluscs, as insects, as vertebrates*. However, the programme of study for Key Stage 2 does not require them to recall such groupings.

 **SAFETY** – Children should wash their hands after handling animals.  
 **SAFETY** – All off-site visits must be carried out in accordance with LEA/school guidelines.

- that animals and plants in a local habitat are interdependent
- how animals and plants in a local habitat are suited to their environment

- ◆ Ask children what they remember from previous work about the feeding of animals and plants and ask them to suggest other reasons why animals need the plants and why plants might need the animals. Help children to use their own knowledge and observations and secondary sources to make an information card about an animal or plant in the local habitat.

- identify ways in which the animals depend on plants *eg for food, shelter, shade* and ways in which the plants need animals *eg provide fertiliser for the soil, help to disperse seeds*

This activity could be IT based (see IT Unit 4A 'Writing for different audiences').  
The information cards could be pooled and used for the next activity.

- that food chains can be used to represent feeding relationships in a habitat
- that food chains begin with a plant (the producer)

- ◆ Remind children of earlier work on food chains and present children with information *eg from their information cards* about the animals and plants in a local habitat, or in another habitat, together with information about what the animals eat. Ask children to construct food chains and to explain to each other what they mean. Elicit children's understanding of the terms 'producer' and 'consumer'.

- construct a food chain *eg rosebush → greenfly → ladybird* and explain it *eg this means the greenflies feed on the rosebush and the ladybirds feed on the greenflies*
- explain why plants are essential to food chains *eg plants grow using air and water, they don't eat other things*

It may be helpful to refer to everyday uses of the words 'producer' and 'consumer' and use these as analogies. Plants 'produce' food for animals which 'consume' etc.  
Children may be aware that there are some insect-eating plants. However, few plants feed in this way.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- that different plants grow in different soil conditions
- that water and nutrients are taken in through the root
- that roots anchor the plant in the soil

- to make careful, relevant observations of soils
- to draw conclusions from observations and to explain these using scientific knowledge and understanding

- that different animals and plants are found in different habitats
- how animals and plants in a second habitat are suited to their environment

- to construct food chains in a particular habitat

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Show children a collection of labels from garden and house plants which illustrate the needs of the plants in terms of *eg light, shade, soil type, water etc.* Ask children to suggest why soil type is important. Show children some plants with different shaped roots, pictures of different roots. Ask them to suggest how roots ensure the plant gets water and nutrients. Ask children to draw and annotate a diagram showing the importance of a root to a plant and ask them why fertilisers are often added to soil.

- ◆ Present children with two soil samples and ask them to observe them closely *eg with hand lenses or microscopes* and to record differences between the two soils *eg size of pieces of rock, colour, dryness, animal/plant material.* Challenge children to explain which could provide a good habitat for a soil-living animal and which would allow plants to anchor themselves most effectively. Remind them of earlier work on soils and drainage. Ask them to present their ideas in drawing and writing.

- ◆ Extend children's understanding of habitats to a contrasting habitat which may not be in the locality *eg seashore, river, woodland* and using secondary sources *eg video, CD-ROM, reference books or a visit* illustrate the range of animals and plants living there. Ask children to use secondary sources *eg reference books, CD-ROMs, photographs* to find out about a specific animal and a specific plant *eg a wading bird, seaweed or a woodland plant (bluebell)* and how it is suited to the habitat in which it lives. Ask children to make an information card about the organism and make a class display to illustrate the animals or plants in this habitat. Talk with children about differences between the habitats and the animals and plants found in each.

- ◆ Using the information gathered in the previous activity help children to construct food chains relating to the habitat. Challenge children to trace the food chains back to the producer. Ask children to compare the food chains from the two habitats and talk with them about similarities and differences.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### CHILDREN

- recognise that different plants grow well in different conditions
- produce a drawing showing nutrients and water being taken in by the root and the root anchoring the plant in the soil

- describe observed differences between the soils
- identify characteristics that would suit a soil-living animal *eg air spaces, dampness, plant material* and explain why these are important

- name some animals and plants found in the habitat
- identify features of animals and plants which make them suited to their habitat *eg long legs for wading birds, bladders to make seaweed float*

- sequence food chains within a habitat including a plant as a producer and using the arrow convention correctly

## POINTS TO NOTE

Dandelion and carrot roots can be used as examples of long tap roots. Pictures (or a visit to a site) to show a tree fallen in a storm help to reinforce the idea of roots anchoring a plant.

It is helpful if children see very different soils *eg a sandy soil and a heavier soil.*

 **SAFETY** – Select soils from areas without broken glass and unlikely to be contaminated with dog faeces. Wash hands after handling soils.

A visit to a non-local habitat would enhance this part of the work.

 **SAFETY** – All off-site visits must be carried out in accordance with LEA/school guidelines.

Children may begin to see how food chains interconnect. If so, the idea of food webs could be mentioned. However, these are not required by the Key Stage 2 programme of study.



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