

Science

Our third grade science curriculum takes on a quality and approach significantly different from that of the earlier years. With his newfound separateness and the resulting focus on practical earthly realities, the third grader is ready to take a more objective and focused look at life on earth. The first things all human beings look for when they realize they are here are on earth and must survive are food and shelter. Virtually all approaches to education, at some point during the children's schooling, turn their focus toward food and shelter. During the third grade these are the central focus of our science curriculum.

Because our focus is always on an ecosystem outlook, our focus on food and shelter includes an exploration of climate (weather) and soils. It is not really possible to study shelter and food without this information.

The sciences of life on earth will be our focus once each term, each time beginning with or coming out of the cultural context of the term. One of these periods will focus primarily on house building, one primarily on the growing of grains (these being the "staff of life"), and one on farming in general. Each parent will have to look at the climate where she lives, the possibilities for house building and farming projects, and from this figure out what order in which to address these. Then she can decide which culture each can most readily be drawn from.

With each study, a look at both soil and climate will serve as the foundation. For example, if the parent chooses to begin to study house building during a block on the Hopi Indians, then the study of soil will begin with the red rock and thick clay soil of the Southwest. The quality of the rock and soil features centrally in the Hopi creation myths as the people come up through the Sipapu, or Grand Canyon. This historical context sets a tone of mystery and reverence for this study. Because of the specific properties of this soil, adobe bricks can be made in the Southwest. After a focused look at this soil in relation to house building, including an experience of making and building with adobe bricks, it is important to expand this perspective to look at other soils and other houses around the globe.

As far as possible - within the rhythmic health of the situation - it is best to begin looking at each new kind of house and soil with a short story from the people of that area. Because the children will have a strong grounding in how the soil affects the possibilities for house building and how the climate affects the need for different kinds of houses, they will only need enough of a story to set the mood of that culture and a sense of sacredness or reverence for the area they are looking at. This part of the study usually takes only two weeks. We're only looking at major types of houses, soils and climate.

The same basic approach is used in studying the grains and general farming. We begin with an in-depth look at the dominant grains or farming approach in the culture we are studying. On this base, we take off and look at grains from different cultures. The great majority of cultures have specific myths related to the sacred quality of the grain that they see as their staff of life.