

Teacher Education Institute (TEI)

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Natural History and Nature Study

Natural history and nature study is the third subject area (with history and geography) which is a natural follow on from Home Surroundings (Environmental Studies). Natural History should always begin with a study of man himself so children obtain a feeling for the way in which the three kingdoms of nature are united. Man thus represents a synthesis at a higher level.

Wherever possible teachers should make use of imaginative and pictorial methods. Children will thus obtain living concepts and will feel in sympathy with the forces of nature and in so doing they will obtain an appreciation of their own place in the world of nature.

In Classes 4 and 5 children are introduced to the plant and animals worlds through the same type of methodology of teaching as described above. In Class 6 the study of nature is continued although in a more specialised form. The study of mineralogy becomes part of the Geography lessons and Physics is introduced. In Class 7 the specialised study of Botany and Physics is continued and Chemistry is introduced. In Class 8 Botany, Physics and Chemistry are all studied as separate subjects.

Class 4 - In Nature Study (Class 4) children are taught how the growth of the plant is concentrated in the seed; through the methodology children can be encouraged to feel the cosmic significance of the world of nature. They can learn the way in which formative forces are working; how the plant world is dependant on the earth. Children of this age should be taught to think of them as the offspring - the last, outward growing product of a living earth organism.

Moving on from this how the animal kingdom is related to man and how man possesses a threefold organisation. For example, if many of the lowest form of animal life are examined, we find that many of these species consist of little more than a sheath surrounding the protoplasm and as such can be related to the head organism of man. Children can be shown how the head consists of a cuplike formation which encloses the soft part of the brain.

If fish and their allied species are next taught to the children it can be shown how the spinal column has developed in such species and that this is related to the rhythmic system of man and, in particular, to the human-chest-organisation. Finally how animals are related to man's limbs and metabolism.

Thus we see, if a return to the study of homo sapiens is then made, how man is the only species which is a synthesis of the three systems; head system, chest system and system of limbs and metabolism. From such study children begin to realise their relationships and responsibility to the other kingdoms.

The world of minerals is introduced in Class 5 and a more formal study is made in Class 6; connections are made with other subject areas including physics and geography. In Class 7 Nutrition and Hygiene are studied in Botany (other specialised areas are studied in Physics and Chemistry).

Although each science subject is studied as a separate entity one of the main tasks is to indicate their inter-relatedness. In Classes 8, 9 and 10 other specialised areas are studied although wherever possible children are shown how different parts of their own nature are connected with the world around us.