

Teacher's Resource Guide for Fernando's Gift

Multicultural Thematic Unit Based on Douglas Keister's Fernando's Gift Author and Illustrator Douglas Keister Unit Developed by Lisa Taylor

Summary...

Fernando, a young boy living in the rain forest of Costa Rica, discovers the fate of his environment as he and his friend, Carmina, encounter deforestation. Fernando and Carmina learn the effects of deforestation through the eyes and words of his grandfather. After Carmina discovers that her favorite tree, the cristobal tree, has been cut down, Fernando decides to replace it with one from his father's greenery and help to restore the rain forest.

Reading Level ...

Middle Elementary (3rd and 4th grade) (I have adjusted the thematic unit to fit the level of

Themes...

Costa Rica Rain Forests Deforestation Friendships Spanish Language Family Life

Before Reading Questions...

What are the rain forests? What type of climate and environment is found in the rain forest? What type of people and animals are found living in or near the rain forest? What does deforestation mean? What is the purpose of deforestation? What happens to people and animals when trees are removed from their environment? What benefits or roles do trees have for people and animals?

Purpose...

Fernando's Gift is an excellent opening for exploring a unit of "environmental preservation," a theme that has students working with and discovering the effects of deforestation on the environment and members of the local community. I also feel that by integrating the cultural differences of the people living in the rain forest and how they rely and depend on the forest, the students will have a better understanding of the importance of all aspects of earth on humans.

Vocabulary...

After Reading Questions...

What aspects of the environment they live in does Fernando and his family rely on for survival? How would removal of the forest cause struggles for Fernando and his family? How is Fernando's daily life different from your own? What is the main purpose of Fernando's gift to Carmina? If Fernando and his family had to move the U.S.A. how would his life change? What are a few ways we can change on the amount of deforestation occurring in the world today?

Language Arts ...

Have the students design a collage of all the animals that they can think of or heard about in the story that live in the rain forest. This can create a visual image of the amount of life that exist in the forest. Choose an animal that lives in the rain forest and write a short story, from its point of view, about how deforestation would affect their existence. Have the students create a newspaper ad or pamphlet, that could be distributed, with reasons why deforestation needs to be reduce in the rain forests. Write a short story about how life would change for Fernando and his family if they had to leave Costa Rica and live elsewhere.

Social Studies ...

Have the students take a picture of the world and color in all the areas that are considered rain forests. Also, name the country that they're found in and the different types of people that live there.

Math...

Have the students create a graph on the amount of deforestation that has occurred over the last 100 years. They could also include a graph with percentage that show the areas with the most deforestation occurring in the shortest amount of time. Art

Art...

Have the students draw a picture of what the rain forest and the living communities within it might look like once total deforestation took place.

Science...

Make a poster depicting the life cycle of a tree in the rain forest. Include the water cycle and nutrient cycle for the trees existence. Write a report on deforestation which should include the implications of and benefits of, if any. List ways in which we could help the animals of the rain forest stay in existence even though deforestation is occurring in their environment.

Background Information ...

The tropical rain forests of Costa Rica are continuing to be diminished. Over the past 75 years, almost 90% of Costa Rica's old-growth rain forest has been removed for banana and coffee plantations, for cattle grazing and for timber. By destroying the rain forest, not only are animal environments in jeopardy, but also the human race that has built their lives around the rain forest and all it has to offer to their culture.

About the Author...

Douglas Keister, the author and the illustrator of Fernando's Gift, lives in Oakland, California. He has had many works published in a number of different magazines. Some of his adult books include Black Rock: Portraits on the Play and America's Painted Ladies: The Ultimate Celebration of Our Victorians. Douglas Keister actually spent several months, over two different research trips, in Costa Rica in order to establish the story line behind his book, Fernando's Gift. He spent time with the Vanegas family who live in Costa Rica. From them, Keister was able to grasp the importance of the rain forest to their culture and collect the photographs used in his

book.

Suggested Readings ...

Costa Rica (Cultures of the World) by Erin Foley Published 1997/Library Binding Children Save the Rain Forest by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, Dan L. Perlman (Photographer) Published 1996 The Costa Ricans by Richard Biesanz, Karen Biesanz, Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz Published 1988 Amazonian Deforestation and Climate By J.H.C. Gash, C.A. Nobre, R.L. Victoria Published 1996 Amazonian Rain Forest: Ecosystem Disturbance and Recovery: Case Studies of Ecosystem Dynamics Under a Spectrum of Land Use - Intensities (Ecological) by Carl F. Jordan Published 1987