

Biome Readers



The purpose behind the creation of this material is to provide the emergent readers in a primary or early elementary classroom with nonfiction and reality-based fictional literature which is relevant to what they are learning about. The context of that relevant field of study is the biome curriculum and the subsequent study of each continent by biomes offered by Waseca Learning Environment. Children learn about the plants, animals and indigenous people who inhabit the biomes of a continent in terms of their adaptations to the biome. Through the biome readers, they are able to read more about those inhabitants in books specific to their reading level with carefully controlled vocabulary. The readers follow the sequential introduction of phonetic principles used by Orton-Gillingham. They are graded and cumulative in their inclusion of phonetic principles, isolating certain phonetic elements while including previously introduced elements. The names of certain animals along with common sight words provide exceptions to the controlled vocabulary. The sequence of phonetic principles is as follows:

1. Red level- short vowel phonetic words with a focus on 3 letter combinations
2. Orange level- consonant blends (st-, -mp, etc.)
3. Yellow level- consonant diagraphs (ch, tch, sh, th)
4. Green level- words ending in -ng, -nk
5. Aqua level- silent e words
6. Blue level- long vowel sounds
7. Purple level- diphthongs (er, ir, ur, or, ar, ow, ou, aw, au, oy, oi)
8. Pink level- silent letters (mb, kn, wr, le)
9. Gold level- includes words that have different sounds for the same spelling (oo, ear, hard/soft c, and hard/soft g)

Biome Readers are packaged as a set for each continent study and should include:

- a set of booklets covering the sequence outlined above (some sets contain more than one book for a certain level)
- picture cards to illustrate each page of each book (color-coded to match the book)
- text cards to match each picture card (color-coded to match the book)
- masters for making copies of the books

Presentation:

1. After introducing the concept of a biome and the different categories of biomes found in the world, focus on a continent to be studied in terms of biomes. Provide a puzzle map or picture of the continent divided into biome regions. Look at one biome at a time in terms of the animals and people that live there. Explore the animals and people through language cards. Encourage the children to find out more about the biome and to write researches about what they know about specific animals, plants, and people.

2. Introduce the biome readers as a resource for their research. If the Waseca Reading Program is used in your classroom, the color-coding corresponds to the readers and each child will know the color level to which they can read. If they are on the yellow cards, they can read all of the books up to and including the yellow level.

3. The booklet is intended as the first step in the process. It is not illustrated so that the child can focus on phonetically decoding the words and cannot guess the text by the pictures. Work on any sight words that may be encountered prior to reading the book. The words “lives” and “eats” are necessary to conveying information about biomes. You may wish to highlight the phonetic principles introduced with markers consistent with the color-coding. You could have a highlighted version and an unhighlighted version of the book available.

4. The second step in the process is to lay out the picture cards. You can talk about the story and what the child remembers of the text as you do so. If there is a story line, the cards may be put in sequence. Children then read the text on each card and match it to the picture that illustrates that text. The cards can be turned over for control of error.

5. Make copies of the booklets to be given to students. The child can read the book and illustrate the opposite blank page independently. This is a good check for comprehension and involves a third reading of the text. The book can then be taken home and read to parents for further practice and sharing.

6. An optional extension might include taking out the picture cards and writing original text to accompany the pictures. Another extension would be creating a new book about another animal found on that continent. What biome does it live in? What does it eat? How does it adapt? Write a story about a day in its life. Illustrate your book. Make a new book and set of cards for the biome readers.

Enjoy!
feedback welcome
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