

Aboriginal seasons

Overview

About the lesson

Students are to record and make observations about the weather, record and describe local native plants and link their observations to Aboriginal seasons.

Year level

Year PP - 2

Learning objectives

Students will:

- Observe, record and comment on the patterns of weather.
- Explore the concept of seasons, in particular the Aboriginal seasons relevant to their local area.
- Consider how changes in the seasons affect human activity.
- Record and describe the features of native plants.

Curriculum Links

HASS	
Geography	ACHASSK032
	ACHASSK049
Biological sciences	ACSSU017
	ACSSU030
Earth and space sciences	ACSSU004
	ACSSU019
	ACSSU032
Nature and development of science	ACSHE013
	ACSHE035
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures	OI.2
	OI.3
	OI.5

> Lesson Plan

Engage and set the scene

1. Show students a calendar(s).
 - What is it? What does it do? What sort of information does it tell us?
 - What is the order of the months?
2. Ask the children to think about when their birthday is, and form a circle in order of their birthday months.
 - What are the seasons?
 - Who has a birthday in summer/autumn/winter/spring (alternatively during wet/ dry season)?
3. Working individually or in 'birthday month groups', get students to think about what the weather is normally like around their birthday, and the sort of things that happen at school or in the community around that time. Record the information as a class, e.g.:

Summer: Dec, Jan, Feb

Weather: hot, dry

Activities: go to the beach, eat ice cream, Christmas, Chinese New Year, start school

Autumn: Mar, Apr, May

Weather: becoming cooler, more rain

Activities: Easter holidays, Anzac assembly, start soccer or football seasons

Winter: Jun, Jul, Aug

Weather: cold and wet

Activities: Winter holidays, school winter sport carnival, play indoors

Spring: Sep, Oct, Nov

Weather: becoming warmer, sunny days

Activities: Royal Show, school athletic carnivals, Halloween

(Answers may vary)

- How can you tell when your birthday is, what special event is coming up, or what season it is, if you didn't have a calendar? (*look outside, think of the patterns of weather*)

Equipment and Links

One or more calendars - wall calendar, desk calendar, phone calendar, diary etc.

Explore

1. When we talk about the weather, we mean how hot, wet and windy it is (and what the air pressure is). Discuss: how can we tell? (e.g. *wind - leaves flutter or trees bend, from which direction?; wet - heavy rain drops, light drizzle, dew on plants, wet ground, hot / cold - we sweat or shiver; air pressure - warm air rises to make clouds etc*)
2. Show students weather measuring instruments and explain how to use them. Go outside and have students observe and record the weather. If you do not have access to instruments, you or your students can [make their own](#) or just record their qualitative observations. Younger students can draw pictures or symbols instead of recording measurements.

Discuss:

What are some good activities for a day like today? (e.g. *hot - eat ice cream; windy - fly a kite etc; cold and wet - play indoor games*)

What do you think the weather will be like tomorrow? Next week?
3. Repeat the weather observation for a 1-2 week period. Discuss findings and ask students to explain the general pattern of weather over this period. For older students, you can show students the average temperature and rainfall for your area for this time of year, and discuss if the weather has been warmer/cooler/wetter/drier than usual.
4. You may also want to incorporate discussion about the sunrise and sunset times into your discussion.

Equipment and Links

Simple weather instruments:

- thermometer
- rain gauge
- anemometer
- wind vane
- barometer (optional)

Weather recording sheet

Optional/background info:

Climate data (simplified) for your area for the current time of year

> Lesson Plan

Explain

1. Discuss:
 - The patterns of weather (climate/seasons) are different in different parts of the world.
 - When European people came to Western Australia they brought with them their ideas of seasons – spring/summer/autumn/winter. However, the European way of thinking about the weather does not always reflect the patterns of weather in different parts of Australia.
 - Different groups of Aboriginal people have their own seasonal calendars, which more accurately describe what is happening in the local environment. The seasons are based on observations of the weather, and also observations of plants, animals and the sky.
 - Aboriginal people moved across the land in the course of the year, and did different activities depending on the different season. The seasons dictated what they should/could eat at a specific time, and the sort of things they needed to do to take care of the land.
2. Name and describe Aboriginal seasons with reference to your local area (see 'useful resources' section below). Try to show students some props or images of the specific plants or animals that might indicate changes in the seasons, or which might be particularly important to Aboriginal people during a specific time.
3. Stress Aboriginal seasons are based on what is actually happening in nature, not on dates in a calendar.
4. Focus on the current Aboriginal season in your local area. As a class, develop some actions to match the season (e.g. if the season involves firing the land, students can mimic the action of making fire). Play a 'Simon Says' style game with student over the course of the season.

Equipment and Links

Images or props which help to illustrate the Aboriginal seasons in your local area. Refer to 'useful resources' for background information.

If possible, invite members from the local Aboriginal community to share their knowledge with students.

Extend and elaborate

1. Ideally try to complete this activity at your local wetland where you might find the widest diversity of native plants and animals.
2. Explain, just like the weather changes in the course of a year, plants change over the seasons and animals behave differently. Aboriginal people carefully observed these changes to help them keep track of the seasons.
3. Send students out to photograph – or create a drawing – of a native plant growing around your school (or local wetland). They can write a caption for their picture (or collage of pictures) and add descriptive labels which point out different features of the plant. Encourage students to take note of plant colours, smell, size and shape of leaves, presence of any fruit/nuts, type of bark plus any animal activity on or near the plant.
4. You can repeat this activity later on in the year, and discuss how the plants have changed across different seasons.

Equipment and Links

Tablets/cameras and/or paper and clipboards

Your school gardener, local environmental officer, Aboriginal elders and garden-savvy parent and grandparent helpers may be able to assist with identification of plants and provide additional information about them.

Evaluate and reflect

1. How many Aboriginal seasons can you name? Can you name them in order?
2. Which Aboriginal season does your birthday fall into?
3. How would you describe what a local native plant looks like during the current Aboriginal season to someone who cannot see?
4. What is the most interesting thing you learned about the weather and seasons?

➤ Lesson Plan

Useful resources

- Water Corporation. (2016). *Aboriginal season examples*.
<https://www.watercorporation.com.au/-/media/files/education/lessons-and-teaching-resources/lesson-plans/activity-sheets-and-fact-sheets/aboriginal-season-examples-fact-sheet.pdf>
- Water Corporation (n.d.). Western Australian Aboriginal language centres contact list.
<https://www.watercorporation.com.au/-/media/files/education/lessons-and-teaching-resources/lesson-plans/activity-sheets-and-fact-sheets/western-australian-aboriginal-language-centres-contact-list.pdf>
- ABC. (n.d). *Indigenous seasons*.
<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/indigenous-seasons/10522128>
- Australian Bureau of Meteorology (2016). *Indigenous Weather Knowledge*. <http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/calendars/nyoongar.shtml>
- CSIRO. (n.d.). *Indigenous seasons calendars*.
<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Environment/Land-management/Indigenous/Indigenous-calendars>
- Sciencing. (2018). *Easy homemade weather instruments for kids*.
<https://sciencing.com/easy-homemade-weather-instruments-kids-7974126.html>
- Germain, K. (1999). *Big rain coming*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt . Also see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlhkV491UyE>