Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - No Island is a Man
Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.
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BJB2 waves good evening to Bill

BillHi: Evening.

BJB2: Bill Hilton is the discussion leader for Nuts About Nature

BillHi: Jr.

BJB2 . o O (Jr.)

BJB2: we usually start the discussions with introductions. Can you please tell Bill where you are located and what you teach or hope to teach?

BillHi: Don't be shy.

BJB2: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and am the moderator for the discussion

DeannaCN: Houston, Tx Alief ISD

DeannaCN: Third grade

JulieCard: I'm an MAT student at the University of Utah hoping to teach High School Biology

CandiceL: I'm from the University of Houston and hope to teach second grade. I am currently with Pre-K.

ShaniB: I am in Houston, TX and teaching first grade in Pasadena ISD

JacquelinC: Houston, TX in Klein ISD. I'm student teaching in the 3rd grade.

RachelRo: Houston, TX 2nd grade

ShaniB: let me correct myself...student teaching

RachelRo: I am student teaching also

DeannaCN: Me too, Student teaching

CandiceL: I am also

BJB2: looks like a wide range of grades, Bill

BillHi: Great. Let's move on.

BillHi: I'm Bill Hilton Jr., executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York, South Carolina.

BillHi: I taught high school and college biology for about 20 years and also travel the country giving talks about natural history topics and doing inservice and preservice teacher training.

BillHi: "Nuts About Nature" is a discussion aimed at helping teachers (and future teachers) use the out-of-doors--either for real or virtually--to excite students about learning science and other disciplines.

BillHi: Each month I select a topic for discussion that is intended to make you think and, in the end, to give you some ideas for implementing activities with your current (or future) students.

BillHi: Three ground rules: 1) Please hold the conversational chatter. This is, after all, an on-line classroom.

BillHi: 2) Try to stay on-topic during the discussion so we can get to a meaningful end-point during our hour together.

BillHi: 3) Don't use Google to search for answers to my questions. I want to know what's in your head, not what's on the Web.

BillHi: **CarlS**, could you intro yourself. City/state and what you're teaching?

CarlS: Hi, This is my first online visit. I teach at Texas A&M University Kingsville. My field is Mass Comm.

BillHi: Great. Most of the others are student teaching right now.

CarlS: Very nice.

BillHi: Thanks, first, to BJ for facilitating as always. BJ has been crowned the "Queen of Multitasking."

CarlS: May I just observe your chat?

BillHi: Yes.

CarlS: Thanks.

BillHi: The title for tonight's discussion wasn't quite right.

BillHi: It was stated as "No Man Is An Island."

BillHi: It's supposed to be "No Island Is A man."

BJB2 apologizes for the error

BillHi: Regardless, it's a take-off on a literary phrase.

BillHi: As is often the case for my titles, it is a play on words. Anyone know the literary work to which I'm referring?

BillHi: Anyone?

JeffC: what's the hint?

CandiceL: I have heard the phrase before but don't know the work

JeffC just got here

BillHi: It's actually a quote from Meditation XVII by John Donne, a Renaissance metaphysical poet and clergyman.

BillHi: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less..."

BillHi: Donne was saying that all of HUMANKIND is interconnected, but he didn't realize he actually was making a very profound statement about ECOLOGY.

BillHi: And what does ecology say?

BillHi: Anyone?

JulieCard: Everything's connected

BillHi: To . . . .

CandiceL: each other??

JulieCard: Everything else, somehow

BillHi: Yes, that's good.

BillHi: "Everything's connected to everything else."

BillHi: All of you should have that phrase hanging over your heads in the classroom.

BillHi: (-:

BillHi: It could be the most important message you could ever convey.

BillHi: But how do you actually TEACH that concept?

BillHi: Anyone?

ShaniB: the food chain?

ShaniB: with younger students

JacquelinC: You could teach a topic and relate it to the different disciplines (math, language, etc.)

CandiceL: cause and effect

JulieCard: You could use historical examples of non-native species being introduced, and the chain effect it had on the ecosystem.

BillHi: Anyone else?

DeannaCN: I was thinking the food chain as well

CandiceL: supply and demand

DeannaCN: Family history

BillHi: Everyone seems to be thinking in sentence fragments. (-:

BillHi: It's probably the result of "Instant Messaging."

BJB2 nods solemnly

BillHi: So let's take the "food chain."

BillHi: How does that show how everything's connected to everything else?

CandiceL: Because it is a cycle

BillHi: And how do you teach it?

JacquelinC: each member of the chain is dependent on one or more of the other members

BillHi: Cycles can occur in a closed system.

DeannaCN: You start with one animal and show its food chain like a tiger then go all the way to grass

BillHi: One or more isn't "everything."

BillHi: A "friend" of mine once told me to go to grass . . .

BillHi: Why a tiger?

SusanR joined the room.

DeannaCN: It's simple and familiar for younger students

CandiceL: Show students the effects of different events such as the extinction of an animal or plant

BillHi: We're concentrating on the food chain.

BillHi: Is extinction tied to that?

ShaniB: Animals relate to the food chain because we eat animals

CandiceL: So if all the grass were to die other animals that feed off of it would also

DeannaCN: Well once something decomposes on the ground it helps the grass or other plants grow that other animal eat... and so on...

ShaniB: Animals also die and become earth. then we grow plants.

BillHi: Okay. It sounds like all of you must have had the same high school biology text. (-:

BillHi: Any you obviously learned the concept of the "food chain."

BillHi: But how are YOU going to teach it?

BillHi: Let's go back to the tiger.

DeannaCN: You could ask the students what tigers might eat... they might say a gazelle.... well then ask the students what they eat, they would say grass or plants.... then how do the plants and grass grow?

BillHi: How many of you have ever seen a tiger on your school grounds or college campus (not counting team mascots and stuffed animals)?

BillHi: Anyone?

JacquelinC: Can we use humans instead?

DeannaCN: well no but its familiar.... you know the zoo...

JulieCard: not me.

BillHi: Let's NOT use humans for right now.

BillHi: Is it always good to teach something that's familiar--something they already know?

ShaniB: We could use plants.

DeannaCN: I would think for younger students just to introduce the concept.....

JacquelinC: I'm not sure it's always good, but I think it's good for students to make a connection to prior knowledge.

JulieCard: What if you go outside, find a big tree in your school yard, and ask the students what is influencing that tree.

BillHi: Okay. Julie hits TWO of my points at once.

BillHi: The first point is that I think we serve our students better teaching them about plants and animals they're likely to encounter in their own backyard.

BillHi: They already know about tigers from the Discovery channel.

BillHi: They probably know less about local, native species.

BillHi: But what's my SECOND point?

BillHi: Julie alludes to it.

CandiceL: Giving the students something concrete to look at and touch

JulieCard: Have the students discover for themselves that everything's connected, without you telling them?

ShaniB: Showing them the tree in the environment

BillHi: Go on . . .

BillHi: Julie's 'way ahead; she's already on the THIRD point. (-:

JulieCard: Make them think in a deeper way about things they see all the time-- they will come to that conclusion themselves?

BillHi: Maybe.

BillHi: How did you folks learn about the food chain?

DeannaCN: a worksheet

BillHi: Yuk!

JacquelinC: a teacher told us to read from our science books

CandiceL: pictures, videos, text

ShaniB: videos and pictures

BillHi: Yukyukyukyukyuk.

BillHi: You mean NONE of you went outside to actually look at any food chains?

DeannaCN: Umm no, high school bio

ShaniB: No.

JacquelinC: no

JulieCard: In the classroom: The cycle of DDT with a pyramid which had birds of prey at the top, next insects, etc. Outside of school-- worms inside of apples, birds eating worms, etc.

BillHi: Hmmmm. I taught high school bio, and I took my students out.

DeannaCN: lol nope not mine

JulieCard: I wish mine had-- I would have loved to get out of the classroom.

DeannaCN: yeah me too

BillHi: Okay, so it looks like it's time for us to design a mini leson plan that does NOT use videos, worksheets, etc.

ShaniB: It would be most effective

BillHi: Because you DO want to take your kids outside.

BillHi: After all, if you would have liked it, my guess is they would, too.

BillHi: So we're gonna take the kids out to see if they can discover something about local food chains through experiential klearning.

BillHi: You have to give them a starting point.

BillHi: What is the most basic concept they need to know before they cans trt looking for evidence of a food chain?

BillHi: can start.

JacquelinC: The needs of living things.

BillHi: Sentence fragment.

BillHi: (-:

JacquelinC: Sorry. They need to know the basic needs of living things.

BillHi: Explain.

BillHi: Anyone else?

JacquelinC: For example, they need to know that plants need water, carbon dioxide, and sunlight to grow.

JulieCard: What different organisms do, what they eat, where they go/ if they move, maybe what their names are.

ShaniB: You could begin with the ground.

BillHi: Jacqueline . . . . That's an awful lot of basic info.

BillHi: I don't think they need to know that much about plants.

BillHi: Again, what's the most basic concept they need to know?

ShaniB: The concept of dependency.

DeannaCN: I think that they might need to know what a living thing is..... for younger students they might not know what makes a living thing living....

CandiceL: Everything needs food and water

DeannaCN: Why a rock is not living and why a plant is

BillHi: No . . .the concept of dependency is the goal of the lesson. You don't start with the goal.

CarlS: Bill and others, thanks for letting me observe. I see how this works now. Good evening to you!

BillHi: Carl's leaving too soon.

BJB2 agrees

JulieCard: Maybe they just need to know how to observe their environment?

BillHi: I still don't think we've hit the most basic concept with regard to food chains.

BillHi: Observation is a skill, not a concept.

CarlS: Thanks, but my world is calling. I am in four doctoral classes! I must study for my stats midterm. Bye.

DeannaCN: If a student doesn't know why a plant is a living thing and rock isnt then they really cannot get the concept of a food chain..... a living thing eats breathes and moves on its on of course besides plants

BillHi: Okay, Deanna, I think you just defeated your own argument.

CarlS left the room.

BillHi: (-:

DeannaCN: I don't understand

BillHi: There's no need to know about rocks to understand the basic food chain concept.

BillHi: There is a need to know about plants . . . . And animals.

DeannaCN: Right but they are not living they do not depend on anything to survive

BJB2: all living things need food

BillHi: So leave them out of the equation for now.

CandiceL: I had mentioned that before too

BillHi: Hands, BJ, hands.

BJB2 raises her hand

BillHi: Anyone else besides BJ before we make a cognitive leap?

BillHi: Anyone?

BillHi: Okay. Here's what I think is the most basic concept that kids need to know before you take them outside to start looking for food chains.

BillHi: There are producers, and there are consumers.

BJB2 listens carefully

DeannaCN: oh....

CandiceL: I forgot about that part

JulieCard: So how would you teach that before you go outside?

BillHi: Ahah!

CandiceL: Plants are producers and animals are consumers

BillHi: That's my question of you, Julie. (-:

BillHi: And Candice is basically correct.

ShaniB: Animals can produce and consume.

BillHi: Animals can REproduce and consume.

JulieCard: Maybe ask students for basic, general definitions-- link to movie producer, or commercial consumer, and then tie that to organisms they're familiar with: plants, parasites, bacteria, animals....

BillHi: There's a lot of difference.

BillHi: Most of the time when kids would start looking for food chains, they would ignore the plants.

BillHi: Instead they would probably concentrate on predator-prey relationships.

BillHi: But they need to think about the bigger picture.

BillHi: Let's suppose you took the class out early one morning and saw an owl sitting in a tree, and suddenly it swooped to the ground.

BillHi: Is that a teachable moment . . . As far as food cycles are concerned?

DeannaCN: yeah

JacquelinC: yes

CandiceL: Yes

JulieCard: Was it eating something? If so, yes.

ShaniB: Consuming.

BillHi: All you have to do is ask the students whether they think it COULD be eating something.

BillHi: Okay, so my guess is your minds are already swimming with ways you could teach the food chain . . . OUTSIDE . . .with local organisms.

BillHi: Right?

DeannaCN: yeah

JacquelinC: right

JulieCard: right.

DeannaCN: right

BillHi: Check this out http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek060308.html

ShaniB: Yes...It's most effective.

BillHi: Click on the link above and you'll open a new browser window.

JacquelinC: Nice pictures with a lot of information.

BJB2 smiles...you're in for a real treat with that newsletter!

BJB2: Thanks, Bill...very inspiring discussion!

BillHi: Each week I post a new photo essay about nature . . . Something I hope you can use with your students.

BillHi: Bookmark http://www.hiltonpond.org

BillHi: Everything's connected to everything else.

BJB2 . o O (appropriate)

JulieCard: Thank you, Bill.

JacquelinC: Thanks, Bill.

SusanR: Thank you Bill!

ShaniB: Good Ideas.

BillHi: Appreciate everyone's input . . .

DeannaCN: Thank you

BJB2 waves goodnight.