

Pit

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Objectives:

1. To teach students the basic structure of a food chain.
2. To reinforce the concept that the sun is the source of energy for most food chains.
3. To reinforce the concept that green plants utilize the sun's energy for photosynthesis.
4. To reinforce the concept that decomposers are vital to the continuation of life on earth.

How to Play:

Find the box labeled "Pit". In the box, you will find four different food chains: black, purple, red and green. Each food chain represents a different round. In other words, you will use only black cards for the first round, only red cards for the second round, etc. To get set up for the game, you need to remove the black cards and the black poster showing the completed food chain.

Count the number of groups that will be playing. If you have seven, then sort through the black cards and remove seven of each type of card. In other words, you will need seven suns, seven grass (or whatever), seven grasshoppers, etc. You get the idea...

Have the groups each claim an area to call their own, making sure that you leave a central "pit" open in the middle of the room. Stack the cards on top of each other and deal out ten cards to each group. Make sure that when you deal out the cards, you give them very little variety. In our example from above, Group One would receive seven suns and three grasses; Group Two should receive four grasses and six grasshoppers. Et cetera.. The reason for this is to force "trades" and liven up the game.

Lay the cards face down and caution the groups to not touch them. If a group touches the cards, they will be assessed a ten second penalty when the game begins. Have someone be "Vanna" and take the food chain order poster around to each table, allowing them about ten seconds to look. (Note: the more rounds you play, the less time you want to show the crews the correct order. This forces them to work together, reason things out and pay attention when they have the opportunity to see the answers.)

When you say, "Go!" the group may flip over their cards and sort through what they have. If they have doubles (or more) of one of the cards, they should send one representative to the "pit" with one of their "spare" cards. That person may trade with a person from another table and, without looking at their new card, should return to the group. Only one representative per table is allowed up at any time; if a table sends more than one, they will be unable to trade for ten seconds as a penalty. Also, make sure the group allows everyone a chance to trade. I usually charge a ten second penalty if the same child immediately returns to the "pit" without allowing someone else to go first.

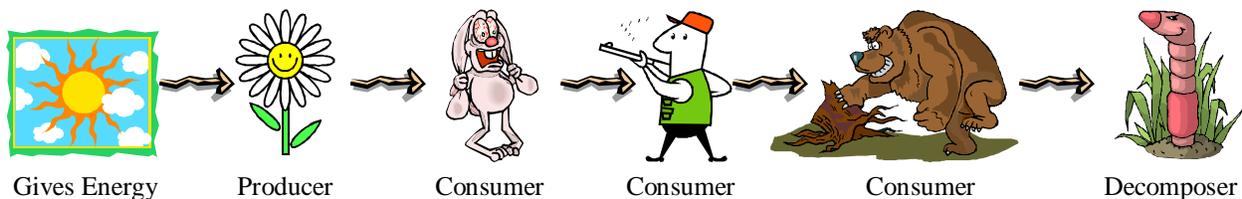
The goal for each group is to get all the cards necessary to assemble the food chain (they shouldn't have any leftover cards when the food chain is complete) and they must also get the order correct. If a group thinks they are done, they shout out, "Pit!" At this point, all trading stops and other groups may work on getting the order correct. "Vanna" will walk over and, without showing the poster to the crew, check the order. If it is correct, that group wins. (By the

way, feel free to go for second and third places to use up time.) If it is incorrect, that group is not allowed to touch the cards for ten seconds and play resumes for the rest of the groups.

After the winners for one round have been decided, pick up and sort out the cards so that they will be ready for the next time. Take a new color food chain and distribute the cards as before. Continue the game...

For the wrap-up, take the time to talk about food chains. Mention that in most examples on earth, the sun is the start of the energy, followed quickly by green plants to take in that energy. Also, note that we have a decomposer at the end of each food chain.

Note: I don't know how well I was able to explain this game. However, if you have ever played the game, "Pit", by Parker Brothers, you will know how this game should work.



Pit Food Chains

Round One

Sun
Flower
Bee
Preying Mantis
Spider
Toad
Snake
Opossum
Owl
Bacteria

Round Two

Sun
Clover
Grasshopper
Preying Mantis
Frog
Shrew
Snake
Weasel
Owl
Slime Mold

Round Three

Sun
Algae
Zooplankton
Shrimp
Water Insect
Sardines
Bass
Barracuda
Shark
Bacteria

Round Four

Sun
Tree
Aphid
Ladybug
Bird
Flying Squirrel
Snake
Raccoon
Owl
Fungus

Disasters

For added fun, create four "Disaster" cards and put them in a hat along with some blank cards. Your Disasters should include: tornado, flood, drought and pollution.

Occasionally during the round, pull a card out. If it is blank or represents a Disaster that would not affect the ecosystem you are working on (i.e. tornado would have limited impact on an ocean ecosystem), the game continues as normal.

If it is a Disaster that would directly affect the Food Chain you are working on, the game stops, and the groups trade cards clockwise around the circle.