



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Keep It Simple

Newport Elementary School, California

Topic: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Practice: Foundational Skills

A teacher at Newport Elementary School uses this worksheet to reinforce a basic sentence construction rule (i.e., sentences require a subject and verb) in the context of a unit on Ecosystems. The lesson begins with the teacher reading *Worms Wiggle* by David Pelham and Michael Foreman and asking students what they noticed. Invariably, students notice the subject/verb sentence pattern throughout the book, such as “Frogs leap.” Students then use this worksheet to build their own simple sentences using the vocabulary of the Ecosystems unit.

The sample here includes a thematically related poem that students created using their noun/verb pairs. As a follow up, the teacher has students pick one of the simple sentences to serve as the central focus of an expository paragraph.

To learn more about teaching students to construct sentences, listen to the audio interview *Learning to Construct Effective Sentences* to hear a sixth-grade teacher explain how she helps students understand sentence construction through mentor texts.

A sample student poem created during this lesson can be found below. The poem is the result of three student pairs merging their simple sentences and selecting the ones they felt were most appropriate. This group decided to have their poem rhyme.

The Circle of Life

Energy radiates.
Raindrops fall.
Seeds sprout.
Earthworms crawl.
Trees mature.
Plants grow.
Bees buzz.
Flowers show.
Bunnies nibble.
Mice chew.
Chickens peck.
Cows moo.
Owls soar.
Wolves track.
Lions stalk.
Predators attack.
Cougar eats.
Rabbit dies.
Energy transfers.
Nature sighs.