



Salmon Life Cycle Pantomime

Introduction

The life cycle of salmon, including hatching, migration to the sea, maturation, and return to their stream of origin, is described in *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed Jones. In this activity, students explore and enact the salmon life cycle. They respond to rain, which is the external cue believed by researchers to trigger the salmon's migrations.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Rainstick
- ◆ Lightweight scarves, blue or green, optional
- ◆ Recorded music, optional: "Morning" from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, op. 46, no. 1; or "The Aquarium" from Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* for younger children

Key Concepts

- ◆ Plants and animals have life cycles.
- ◆ A life cycle includes: birth, development, adulthood, reproduction, and death.
- ◆ Behavior is influenced by internal cues (hunger) and external cues (change in environment, i.e. rain which triggers the salmon's migrations).

For standards correlation please see our website.

Procedure

1. Have the students generate a sequential list of the stages in a salmon's life (choose one species). Write on board.
2. Invite the students to think about how they would create a movement piece to simulate salmon migration; for example: "What would you do with your body to make yourself look like a salmon egg in a redd? How would you move to show you were hatching, or becoming a fry?" Practice: "Let's try that now. We're hatching, very slowly, and we're growing to become... alevin. When you hear the rain [rainstick], it's time to start migrating.
3. Solicit volunteers who would like to be salmon throughout the life cycle. More reserved children can gently waft scarves to simulate a stream or river; pairs of children grasp two corners of each scarf and slowly lift it up and down for the "salmon" to swim beneath. Students in large groups can take turns, with half the group moving, and half watching at a time.
4. Run through the activity, narrating parts of the migration cycle, beginning with the egg stage and ending with digging the redd. When the smolt migrate oceanward, or adults return from the ocean to the river to spawn, signal the change with the rainstick.

Nature Connections

- ◆ Invite students to list predators or obstacles that migrating salmon might encounter. How do the types (and sizes) of predators and obstacles change as the salmon grow larger?
- ◆ Listen to one of the suggested music selections, or one of your choice, and show the salmon migration story with your movements as before, this time accompanied by the music.
- ◆ Extend the performance by adding predators to your cast of characters.