Activity 7: Weather Words

Summary
Students create word games with weather terms

Grade Level
4-8

Estimated Time
One 45-50 minute class period

National Science Education Standards
- Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- Science and technology in society

Objectives
Students will be able to:
- List and define five terms for precipitation.
- Create a word game based on precipitation words.

Background
Students may have heard that the Inuit have 100 different words for snow, while English has very few. The former is not surprising because the precise description of weather conditions may mean the difference between a successful hunt, or even life or death. But English is also richer in "weather words" than you might think. Like Arctic peoples, our language reflects the need to precisely define various weather conditions.

Procedure
1. Ask the class how many words they can think of for precipitation—both liquid and solid. Examples might include: rain, mist, drizzle, downpour, snow, sleet, hail, fog, frost, powder snow mist, ice storm, freezing rain, blizzard, showers, hurricane, thunderstorm, cyclone, typhoon, nor’easter, monsoon, slush, flurry, sprinkle, whiteout
2. Ask students why does English include various terms for wet weather? Why is it important to know if precipitation is hail or rain or snow?
3. Divide class into small groups.
   - Either at the library or on the Internet research terms for precipitation. List and define at least 15.
   - Create weather word games such as jumbles, word search and crossword puzzles to exchange with classmates.

Assessment Ideas
- Have students do each other’s puzzles to test them out.
- Have students make a presentation to a younger class about weather words and present their easier puzzles to them to try out.
Arctic: A Friend Acting Strangely

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Teacher reference: Sample word games

Sample Word Search with Hidden Message

Hidden Weather Message

D I T E S G F R O Z E N Q N P
U R C V D L L O G H E D K L E
B I A S N O W A F A L Q H S R
T L T Z T E C O C L K L A Y C
C S B X Z F C I U I Y X A I
K G O Z W I C V X Q E R K I T
I R Q R Z O L P C Y Y R R A E
M D J T F N N B H S U L S Y E
B R X B P A S I S D V Z Z L
H S D A I K M D D F F H D Z S
Y A O I M H B R N E R W J W B
J Y I E I L P Y E L G X Y M A
H D I L H A F R C P D H N K B
I F D R N E Y K W D R T I I U
R Z E U F S D C J V I H P Y Z

BLIZZARD
FLURRY
GLACIER
HAIL
ICE
PERMAFROST
SEA
SLEET
SLUSH
SNOW

( hidden phrase: It’s frozen.)
Sample Crossword Puzzle

Stormy Weather

Across
2. light rain (answer: drizzle)
7. contains lightning (answer: thunderstorm)
8. can be the size of a golf ball (answer: hail)
9. very wet snow (answer: slush)

Down
1. heavy snowstorm (answer: blizzard)
3. frozen rain (answer: sleet)
4. light snow (answer: flurries)
5. tropical storm (answer: hurricane)
6. lots of this in San Francisco (answer: fog)
Resources