Horatio Ross & Custer's Black Hills Gold Find

Teaching Tip

I-Spy: That’s Not My Habitat

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During this activity your students will participate in a hands-on observation/habitat challenge. Your students will also learn about Horatio Ross, who discovered gold in 1874 on French Creek near what is now Custer, SD.

Activity:

Process

- Introduce the observation/habitat challenge by presenting information about Horatio Ross, the man who is credited with discovering gold in the Black Hills. ([Images of the Past Website](#)) Discuss the importance of keen observation skills in the discovery of gold.

- During this hands-on study, an item will be hidden by the teacher and the students will have to use their observation skills to find it.
  - Select an item.
    - Eraser
    - Button
    - Coin
    - Etc.
  - Photograph the item.
  - Select a location to place the item. Ideally, this activity would be completed outside, but it can be completed inside during adverse weather. Typically, a playground and surrounding area would work nicely. The area should be large and have different types of ground cover (tall grass, short grass, sand, wood chips, mud, dirt, cement, water, trees, etc.) representing multiple habitats. Place the item; it can be placed on a tree, a bench, in the grass, etc. Take 4-6 photos of the item at different distances. Example photos are given in the example below.
  - Record details of the immediate area surrounding the item.
    - Smells
    - Wetness
    - Color
    - How the area surrounding the item feels to the touch.
    - Differences in the temperature of the air surrounding the item and the temperature of the area it is placed on.
    - Etc.
  - Start the activity by showing the students a (close-up) picture of the item in its “habitat” or by providing a clue from above. Groups can be assigned or the students can work independently. The goal of the activity is to use clues to find the item. More points should be given for finding the item with the least amount of clues.
  - Clues about the location should be given at your discretion.
Below is an example of a challenge completed inside due to adverse weather conditions. A pencil eraser was placed at a location in a 3 story building with over 100 rooms. The rooms in the building had multiple styles of furniture, textures and floor coverings, different types of lighting, temperature differences, etc.

Below are a few examples of photos and descriptive clues.

- Room feels cool
- Texture – rough/fuzzy
- Dark grey
- Dirty
- Faint smell of food
- Natural light
- High traffic
- No life noticed
- Manmade structure
- Etc.

The Item – Pencil Eraser

Close up, showing ground cover

Close up, showing more ground cover
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What to expect: An increase in the development of observation skills. Also, this is a great activity that encourages students to take a closer look at habitat around them.

Contact EdServices@sdpb.org for more information about SDPB’s educational resources.