

## Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

November 3, 2016

**Article: “How does soil help stormwater?”**

**Sunday, October 30, 2016** in the print replica of The Seattle Times, Sponsored Newspapers In Education Content, page 3

### **Standard:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

### **Objective:**

Students will read an informational text about soil, and then further understanding by conducting a comparative investigation of different types of soil.

### **Pre-Reading:**

What is soil? Draw a picture of soil.

### **Vocabulary:**

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

*clay*

*compost*

*erosion*

*minerals*

*mulch*

*organic*

*organisms*

*pollution*

*runoff*

*sand*

*silt*

**Comprehension:**

1. Describe poor soil.
2. What is soil quality directly related to?
3. What are the largest mineral particles in soil?
4. What is a living community of organisms that sustains plants, animals and humans called?
5. What are some ways that healthy soil can help fish?
6. What are some ingredients that make good compost?
7. What is mulch?
8. How many organisms live in a teaspoon of healthy soil?

**Post-Reading:**

***“Healthy soils help support plant growth, prevent erosion, and filter out pollutants. Poor soil is compact and lacks organic matter. In fact, organic matter in soil filters out pollution from road runoff which can be toxic to salmon. Healthy soil is a low tech way to manage stormwater by helping filter and store water. Soil quality is directly related to the health of streams and other bodies of water in the Pacific Northwest.”***

**Discuss the following questions in a group:**

What is soil made of? Why is soil important? How does soil help fish? What are some things that you can do to keep soil healthy? What are some new things you learned about soil from reading the article? How do you think soil looks different or the same from the picture you drew during the warm up activity?

**Building Language Skills:**

**After reading the article, complete the activity below:**

Go outside and collect soil from different areas. Compare and contrast the different types of soil you find. What color is each soil? Is the soil dry or wet? How does the soil feel? What do you think each soil is made of—do some soils have more sand, silt or clay than others? How do you know? Create a map of where you found each type of soil (you'll want to make sure to label where you got each samples in order to do this). What do you think the location where the soil was found has to do with how it looks and feels?

**Comprehension Question Answers:**

1. Poor soil is compact and lacks organic matter.
2. The health of streams and other bodies of water in the Pacific Northwest
3. Sand particles
4. An ecosystem
5. Healthy soil can help to slow the flow of stormwater runoff and filter pollutants out of the water. In addition, healthy soils will absorb more water. This increases the volume of groundwater we have – a source for cool water to our creeks during our dry summers.
6. Leaves, chopped stalks, flowers, grass— or vegetable scraps in a worm bin or rodent resistant container
7. “Mulch” is a layer of organic material like leaves, wood chips, compost or grass clippings that you spread in spring or fall around your plants.
8. Four billion!