



Croaking Coquis

Summary:

People make associations between the world and their means of connecting to it. Certain things trigger these associations: visuals, smells, textures, and sounds. Some people associate the coqui frog with Puerto Rico.

Background information:

Coqui frogs provide an aural environmental setting unique to Puerto Rico, an outdoor ambience that many people in Puerto Rico hold dear. Through their gentle peeping, an *extensive* chorus unfolds through 360 degrees as far as an ear can hear in rural and natural areas. It can be stirring in a subtle way. The pervasiveness of the coqui frogs' calls may elicit a sense of déjà vu in expatriate Puerto Ricans, creating for them a sense of longing for their homeland.

The call of a male coqui frog has two parts. It is believed that the initial lower tone is an expression for males to stay away. The second and higher tone beckons females to approach the caller.

Materials:

- CD player
- DVD player/VCR
- CD of coqui frog calls
- DVD disk or VHS videotape of panned Puerto Rico countryside in the evening (I have an original from which I would be happy to make copies)
- Stuffed animal coqui frog
- Photos of coquis in different settings and on people (from personal photos and the internet)
- Computer lab with internet connections

Activity 1:

The coqui frog has a distinctive call. Listen to it. (Play a sample of it, either from a CD or in an audio-visual clip.) Show: photos of the coqui frog, T-shirts with the coqui frog on them, and the plush toy coqui frog. Squeeze the latter for a representation of the frog's call. Have students whistle to emulate the call. Practice it. Tell the class the call's purpose (see the background information above).

Grade Level: 3-12

Goal: Develop an awareness/understanding of the emotional appeal of a notable geographic feature of Puerto Rico, coqui frog, unofficial mascot-symbol of Puerto Rico.

Key concept: Through the senses, promote awareness of surrounding environments.

Objective:

Students will connect with sound aspects of surrounding environments.

Teaching locations:

- Classroom for introduction
- Computer lab
- Outdoors in the school neighborhood
- Wetland area at dusk in the spring: north side of Weston Avenue, 1/4 mile west of Highway J in Weston, Wisconsin

Lesson time:

Activity 1: 20 minutes
Activity 2: 30 minutes
Activity 3: 20 minutes
Activity 4: 20 minutes on site

Subject area for infusion:

Environmental Science

Standards:

Science

F.4.2	EE	
F.8.2	A.4.1	A.12.5
F.12.6	A.4.3	
F.12.7	B.8.12	
F.12.12	A.8.2	
	A.8.4	

Activity 2:

Take the class to a computer lab to do web searches for information on coqui frogs or to be guided through a "search and read" session using the websites noted in the reference section below. Have students take notes (to be used later in an assessment).

Activity 3:

Take students outside, spreading them out about 50 feet from each other. Tell students that during this activity they should slowly turn their heads to listen to what happens around them as they participate. At a signal from you, have students whistle the coqui frog call, closing eyes once the calls begin. You may want to start and stop this to refine the activity. Signal the students to stop. Gather the class to discuss their impressions. Have students imagine extending this activity with thousands of coqui frog calls as far as the ear can hear in every direction.

Activity 4:

To take in an experience similar to what people may experience in Puerto Rico, take the class for an evening outing, right after dusk, to a wetland area in spring to listen to the calls of "peepers." (Secure a site ahead of time where you know you will hear calls of frogs.)

Assessment:

In writing, have students speculate why the coqui frog is regarded as an unofficial symbol for Puerto Rico. Prompt them: to remember what they have learned about coqui frogs (students may refer to their notes at this time) and to relate their own sound experience in activity 3 to this essay.

References:

Puerto Rico Information Page

<http://welcome.topuertorico.org/coqui.shtml>

Picture of a Coqui

http://coqui.org/coqui/ECOQUI_3.jpg

Institute for Biological Invasions

<http://invasions.bio.utk.edu/invaders/coqui.html>

Puerto Rico El Yunque Picture Page

<http://lmtnele.tripod.com/elyunque/id7.html>