Life Cycle (Bird Buffet) Practice Activities

Life Cycle of the North American Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

The North American Ruby–throated hummingbird is a tiny powerhouse of energy, beauty, and athletic ability. With its wings whirring, it is able to hover mid–air, fly backwards, sideways and even upside down!

The life cycle of this super pollinator begins in a soft, warm nest the size of a ping–pong ball. First, the female hummingbird lays its eggs. The eggs are the size of a large pea, and there are usually two, which hatch after 12 to 14 days.

Once hatched, the penny–sized nestlings will spend about three weeks in the nest with their mother. They'll strengthen their wings for flight by flapping them quickly. Then, the fledgling hummingbirds leave the nest for short practice flights. Flying comes naturally for the hummingbird but landing is trickier! The fledglings will remain in the area of the nest for up to 20 days.

Because of its high metabolism, the young hummingbird's main drive is to lap nectar and eat small insects throughout the day. If a hummingbird survives the perils of its first year, the average life span is three to five years. There have been instances, however, of some hummingbirds living as long as 10 to 12 years.

Hormonal changes triggered by decreasing seasonal sunlight cause them to migrate to Mexico and Central America for the winter. The following spring after hatching, hummingbirds are considered to be fully mature adults. They return to the U.S. to build their own nests just in time to find the flowers in full bloom. The life cycle begins again with the newly hatched hummingbird.

First, think about what you already know about hummingbirds. After you finish thinking, read the passage, "Life Cycle of the North American Ruby–Throated Hummingbird."

Next, answer the following questions:
1. What is the beginning information about hummingbirds presented in this passage?
2. What is additional information about hummingbirds presented in this passage?
3. What is concluding information about hummingbirds presented in this passage?
4. What are the signal words the author used?

Finally, create a "Cycle Graphic Organizer" that helps you visualize the different information presented in this passage. This will help you remember the author's main points as you read.

Compare your answers with **Sam's Think Aloud** and graphic organizer.

Sequence Text Structure

- A style of writing in which the author is able to put a series of events in order such as when describing: **a life cycle, something in chronological order, or when providing step-by-step directions**.

Sequence Signal Words

- In order to signal the passage of time when sequencing, authors will utilize **time, days of the week, months, seasons, years, numbers, and letters of the alphabet.**
- Other key signal words include: **first, then, next, finally, before, during, after, additionally, initially, and/or prior to.**

Cycle Graphic Organizer

- A type of graphic organizer that allows the reader to visualize the text structure being used by the author. **In this type of diagram a chain of boxes forming a circle is presented to the reader.** These boxes are organized in a sequence of events.
- Usually, in the first box **there is beginning information** about what is being studied (For example, the birth of an animal).
- **The next box (or boxes) presents additional information** about the subject being studied (For example, the animal's middle life).
- **The last box gives concluding information about the subject that helps lead back into the first box.** This indicates that a cycle of experience (or life) has occurred.

Life Cycle of the Koala

With round ears, a black nose and furry body, the koala looks like a leaf–eating teddy bear. Because of the resemblance, people have referred to the koala as a "koala bear." But the koala is actually a marsupial, and is related to the kangaroo.

The life cycle of the koala is unusual. First, the mother koala gives birth to one joey, about the size of a jellybean. Then, before it can even hear or see, the joey instinctively climbs its way into the mother's pouch. The joey has three jobs during the next six to seven months in the mother's pouch: nurse, grow and enjoy the ride! To prepare the joey for eating the eucalyptus leaves that are coming up on the menu, the koala mother produces a substance in her intestines called "pap."

The joey feeds on this, just prior to coming out of the pouch. Soon, the joey's intestines have the bacteria needed for digesting the tough eucalyptus leaves. At about seven months of age, the joey ventures out of the pouch to eat leaves, while clinging to his mother's back or belly. The pouch will become a place for the koala to return to for nursing pit stops, or to hide from predators. By the time the joey is one year old, he can live independently in the trees. He will soon find his own area, or "home range" of the Australian forest, apart from his mother. Koalas are fully mature by three to four years of age.

First, think about what you already know about koala bears. After you finish thinking, read the passage, "Life Cycle of the Koala."

Next, answer the following questions:

1. What is the beginning information about koalas presented in this passage?
2. What is additional information about koalas presented in this passage?
3. What is concluding information about koalas presented in this passage?

Third, highlight any signal words the author used to help the reader organize the information presented.

Finally, create a "Cycle Graphic Organizer" that helps you visualize how the life cycle of the koala. This will help you remember the author's main points as you read.

Challenge yourself by thinking of an animal that you are interested in studying. Create a "Cycle Graphic Organizer" to show the life cycle of this animal

Compare your answers with **Miako's Think Aloud** and graphic organizer.