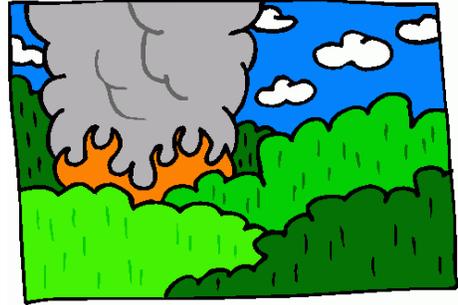

Fire Wars Video



Objective

Students will explain fire ecology concepts by answering comprehension questions about *Fire Wars*, a PBS film about wildfire.

Materials

- *Fire Wars* DVD
- *Fire Wars* video worksheet (copied for each student)
- DVD player and TV or projector (not provided)
- Pencils for each student (not provided)
- **Firewise information packet** (13 items. Use in extension activity.)
 - “Be Ember Aware” pamphlet
 - *Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes* booklet
 - “Firewise in Ashland” map
 - “40 Firewise Things You Can Do” information sheet
 - “Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction” pamphlet
 - “Be Firewise Around Your Home” pamphlet
 - *Fire Resistant Shrubs and Trees for Privacy in Southwestern Oregon* booklet
 - *Becoming a Recognized Firewise Community/USA* booklet
 - “Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes” postcard
 - “Guidelines for Firewise Landscaping in an Urban Setting” brochure
 - “How to Have a Firewise Home” brochure
 - “People Working Together” brochure
 - “Firewise Communities: Living Compatibly with Nature” bookmark

Appropriate Grade Level: 6th-10th

Time Required: 2 Hours

Curriculum Standards: Science: H.2L.1, H.2L.2, 7.2E.4, 8.2E.4, H.2E.1, H.2E.4. Social Science: 6.1, 6.2, 6.8, 6.10, 8.25, 8.26, 8.27, HS.1

Background Information

This 2002 PBS NOVA film is an excellent overview of the complex concepts of fire ecology in the American West. The product description is as follows:

“Every year uncontrollable wildfires ravage the American West, and every year armies of firefighters mobilize to save threatened wilderness and communities. On *Fire Wars*, NOVA accompanies the men and women of the Arrowhead Hotshots during the summer of 2000, one of the most destructive wildfire seasons ever, in which more than six million acres burned. After a century of preventing forest fires at all costs, it may be time to rethink Smokey Bear’s dictum.”

Additional information and resources, including a teacher’s guide for viewing the film can be found at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/fire/>

Activity

During and after viewing the *Fire Wars* film, ask students to complete the *Fire Wars* video worksheet.

Assessments and Extensions

- Assess the students' worksheet answers for completeness and accuracy.
- Conduct the three classroom activities from the *Fire Wars* NOVA website:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/education/activities/2908_fire.html
 - *Where Growth Meets Growth*: students identify fire risk factors for a property located near a wildland area.
 - Use the **Fire Wise information packet** as supplemental information
 - *Fire Season Statistics*: students extrapolate information and further questions for investigation from fire season statistics.
 - *Teacher Demonstration*: students explore the conditions needed for combustion to occur.

Fire Wars video worksheet

Teacher Key

1) **Describe the job of a hotshot firefighter.**

Travel to wildland fire

Construct fire lines or fire breaks

Dig down to the mineral soil (bare ground) to stop the spread of fire

Cut down large trees to reduce fuel

Dump water when the terrain is inaccessible

Smoke jumpers perform the same job as a hotshot fire fighter, but they jump out of airplanes and parachute to fires in very remote areas.

2) **What are the three ingredients for fire?**

Fuel

Ignition

Heat

(Often described as the “fire triangle.”)

3) **How are wildland fires started, spread and stopped?**

Most fires started by lightning strikes

Humans cause fire.

Historically, sparks from trains would start fires.

Fuel continuity and wind spread fire. Weather is the fire “wild card;” high winds can “whip up” a fire and cause it to grow and spread rapidly. Embers can fly on the wind long distances ahead of the main fire and start more fires.

Fires die down in cool and wet weather. Rain or snow is often the only thing that stops big fires.

4) **How did Native Americans use fire before European settlement of the American West?**

Set surface fires

Used fire to clear land for crops and travel routes

In hunting, to force animals to move

Improve wildlife habitat

5) **How did the “Big Blow Up” of 1910 change public attitudes about fire and forest fire policy?**

The catastrophic fire made people very afraid of fire, and fire suppression became the dominant policy. The Forest Service started the “10:00 AM rule,” which meant they tried to put out every fire by the morning after it was reported. Bambi and Smokey the Bear spread the message that fire was evil and needed to be put out as soon as possible. Government started spending millions or billions of dollars per year on firefighting.

6) **How do forest managers use prescribed fire?**

For fuels reduction

To prevent large fires from burning near communities

To restore natural fire patterns

As “back fires” or smaller fires set to reduce the fuels and stop the spread of large fires.