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The Road of Life - A Teaching Aid

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The first eleven chapters of BSCS Blue Version pertain to the evolution of life on earth. In trying to adapt this section of the text to the eighth grade level, the idea for a *Road of Life* emerged.

Hypotheses concerning the origin of the earth and evolution of life were discussed in class. Using any one of these hypotheses, each student was asked to develop a tentative outline containing a logical sequence of events starting with the origin of the earth and continuing through the first living cell. With the outline as a working model the student was to begin construction of a Road of Life using one "city" for each major idea in his sequence.

The class was given this assignment in October. As different life processes were investigated such as fermentation and photosynthesis, these phenomena were evaluated as possible cities along the road. The decision whether an event or process deserved separate city status or should be incorporated into a larger city was left to the student. He was encouraged to defend his selection of cities. This was often cleverly done with road signs, landmarks, welcome signs and other creations which could be associated with the cities.

One day was used each two weeks to discuss how new cities might be organized and to exchange ideas concerning their positions along the Road of Life.

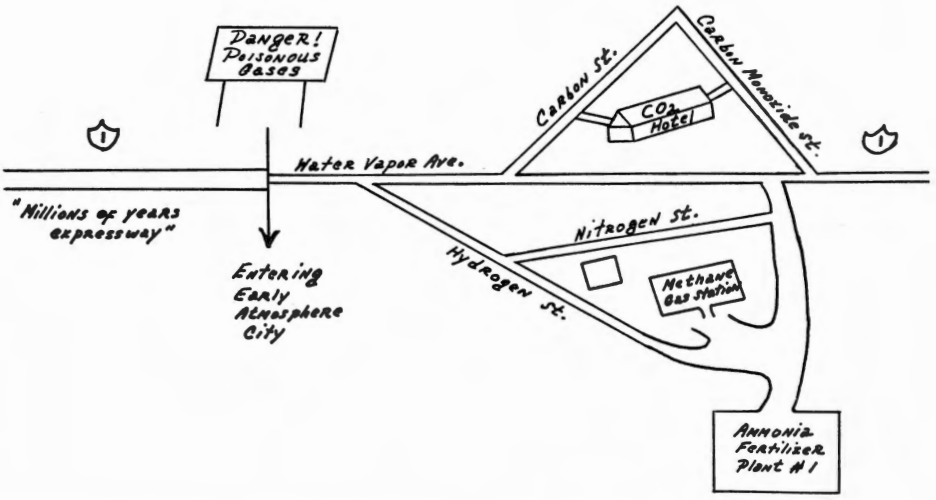
The students were given until March to complete their sequences. Most students decided to map their roads on scrolls. Each student's road was examined by the entire class.

The whole class tried to determine if the cities followed one another in a logical manner. Everyone arranged his Road of Life somewhat differently, which led to some interesting interaction among the students. Most students spent considerable time preparing their roads as indicated by the complexity and originality of their cities. A diagram of one of the cities is shown below.

The following comments were written by some of the eighth graders after they had completed their Roads of Life:

Craig Stevens: "I think the Road of Life helped me understand the whole thing better."

Tom Slade: ". . . it helps you to better understand how life evolved and every process it takes before the first cell."



Devora Anderson: "I did learn a lot, not only in science, but organizing large assignments."

David Ricci: "I thought it was fun after you got started, but it was a lot of work."

Barbara Laires: "I had already understood all the chapters and their relationship to one another. Yet it was kind of good to write it down on paper."

Adapting BSCS Blue Version to the eighth grade level presents its problems. Perhaps the idea of using a Road of Life helped the students to focus on and to evaluate those phenomena which were prerequisites to life on earth. The teacher should avoid overemphasizing the one road idea in evolution. "Detours" and "side roads" along the "main road" provide excellent opportunities to develop other interesting aspects of evolution.

Environment Information Desk Now Monthly Feature at American Museum of Natural History

Starting Wednesday, October 21, and continuing regularly on the third Wednesday of every month, an Environment Information Desk will be in operation steps away from the popular "Can Man Survive?" exhibit at The American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York City. The desk will dispense, free of charge, printed literature dealing with virtually every aspect of modern society's abuse of our natural environment.

Staffed by Museum personnel and by invited experts, the information desk will be a once-monthly resource for direct counsel to students, teachers and citizens in quest of authoritative information. The desk will also serve community groups wishing to move from passive concern to active participation in conservation, anti-pollution and similar environment-saving programs.