

## Fruits and Vegetables with Tops and Bottoms

### Lesson Overview:

Today students listen to the story *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens. This trickster folktale sets the stage for discussing the importance of fruits and vegetables and the different parts of the plant we eat. *The Vegetables We Eat* by Gail Gibbons is another great book to emphasize variety and different vegetable groups.

**Grade Level:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>

**Lesson Time:** 45 minutes

### Materials Needed:

- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens
- *The Vegetables We Eat* by Gail Gibbons
- Small plates
- Selection of fresh fruits and vegetables

### Content Integration:

- Nutrition
- English Language Arts

### Corresponding Standards:

- Classify various foods into appropriate food categories
- Identify how healthful eating habits can lead to wellness
- Plan a nutritious meal
- Practice making healthy eating choices with friends and family
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2](#) Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

### Lesson Objective:

Students will begin to learn why fruits and vegetables are so important.  
Students will have an opportunity to practice making healthy choices.

### Lesson Description:

#### 1. Lead-in:

To start this lesson read *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens.

#### 2. Step by Step:

As you read, stop and discuss what part of the plant is the top half (leaves), what part of the plant is the bottom (roots), and what part is the middle (stem, seed). You may want to draw a picture, labeling the parts of a plant. After you finish reading, ask if any parts of a plant are missing. We also eat flower buds and fruit. Use Gail Gibbons book to emphasize the remaining parts of plants we eat.

*So why are fruits and vegetables so important?*

*Despite all of the controversy surrounding the optimal components of a healthy diet, there is little disagreement among scientists regarding the importance of fruits and vegetables. The results of numerous epidemiological studies and recent clinical trials provide consistent evidence that diets rich in fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic disease. On the other hand, evidence that very high doses of individual micronutrients or phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables can do the same is inconsistent and relatively weak. Fruits and vegetables contain thousands of biologically active phytochemicals that are likely to interact in a number of ways to prevent disease and promote health. Fruits and vegetables are rich in antioxidants, which help protect the body from oxidative damage induced by pro-oxidants. **The best way to take advantage of these complex interactions is to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.***

*The overall message- Fruits and vegetables contain important nutrients that your body needs to grow and stay healthy. To make sure we get all of these nutrients it is important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. This can be accomplished by eating a rainbow of colors.*

- a. Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables*
- b. Eating fruits and vegetables may reduce risk for heart disease and protect against certain types of cancer.*
- c. Eating fruits and vegetables are generally lower in calories than other foods. This is important in helping lower calorie intake.*

After you finish explaining and discussing the general benefits of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables have students select some of these healthy choices to make a snack. Give students a small paper plate and talk about the selection of fruits and vegetables available. We recommend giving students choices by placing a variety of foods on a table and allowing students to choose what they want to add to their plate. Encourage trying new foods. You can even have students build a plant model by arranging the different foods to show roots, stem, leaves, etc.

### **3. Closure**

Ask-- Did anyone try a new food? Did anyone eat all of the plant parts? What foods might make a good snack tomorrow?