**Nature’s Design: Using Biomimicry to Prevent Surface Icing**

**Introduction**

This lesson plans uses student investigation to introduce self-cleaning and water repellant manufactured and natural products. Students will be introduced to the micro- and nanostructure of such products and be introduced to the world of biomimicry through teacher facilitated instruction. Following the investigation of these products, their structure, and the role of biomimicry in modern science students will complete a research project in which they attempt to solve a “real world” problem using their knowledge of biomimicry and nanoscience.

**Learning Outcomes**

* Create a biology lesson plan that incorporates nanoscience and engineering in order to solve a real world problem.
* Students will explore superhydrophobic surfaces both synthetic and designed by nature.
* Students will gain understanding of biomimicry as a way of using nature’s processes for real world applications.
* Students will analyze the uses biomimetics in “real world” scientific applications.
* Students will gain understanding of adaptations in plants.
* Students will demonstrate understanding of micro- and nanoscale measurements.

**Curriculum Alignment**

**Bio 2.1.1** Analyze the flow of energy and cycling of matter (water, carbon, nitrogen and oxygen) through ecosystems relating the significance of each to maintaining the health and sustainability of an ecosystem.

**Bio 2.1.2** Analyze the survival and reproductive success of organisms in terms of behavioral, structural, and reproductive adaptations.

**Bio 4.2.1** Analyze photosynthesis and cellular respiration in terms of how energy is stored, released, and transferred within and between these systems.

**Bio 2.2.1** Infer how human activities (including population growth, pollution, global warming, burning of fossil fuels, habitat destruction and introduction of nonnative species) may impact the environment.

**Chem 1.2** Understand the bonding that occurs in simple compounds in terms of bond type, strength, and properties.

**HS.SI.1** Evaluate resources needed to solve a given problem.

**HS.TT.1** Use technology and other resources for assigned tasks.

**Classroom Time Required**

This lesson is intended for 4-5 consecutive (90 min block) class periods, depending on scheduling.

**Materials Needed**

* Ketchup bottle video (or actual sample of self-cleaning bottle if available)
  + Youtube link: <http://youtu.be/uPJa_eZBPGI> (Mac, 2012)
* Samples of self-cleaning materials and plants (i.e. 5 inch square fabric sample from stain resistant pants such as Dockers or Lee, lotus leaf, water lettuce plant, elephant ear plant, etc…)
* Samples of non-self-cleaning materials and plants (i.e. aluminum foil, glass slides, plastic, regular fabric samples, various tree leaves, etc…) \*These items can vary depending on availability as long as they are flat and non-hydrophobic surfaces.\*
* The Lotus Effect PPT Presentation
* The Lotus Effect PPT Presentation Guided Notes Handout
* Research Guide
* Rubric for presentation
* Airplane Crash Reading (Associated Press, 2009)
* Various Presentation Web sites: Glogster--<http://www.glogster.org/>, Voki--<http://voki.com/>, Animoto--<http://animoto.com/>, Voicethread--<http://voicethread.com/>, Prezi--<http://prezi.com/>

**Technology Resources**

* Internet Connection
* PowerPoint
* Microscopes (Enough for students to work in groups of 2-3)
* Projector
* Digital Camera

**Pre-activities**

Students should have basic microscopy skills in order to compare the microstructure of the plants and manufactured items. Students should have a basic understanding of measurements and metric prefixes.

**Teacher Background**

Scientific developments inspired by nature have resulted in some of the most influential inventions of our modern time. The inventor of Velcro was inspired by the burrs of plants that attach themselves to animal fur. (Benyus, 1997) Biomimicry, or biomimetics, is essentially taking inspiration from nature’s designs, models, and systems to enhance human designs or solve man’s problems. Besides Veclro, biomimicry has led to products such as stain resistant slacks, water resistant windshield coatings, self-cleaning paint, and non-stick containers. These inventions have been inspired by the evolution of organisms found in nature and continue to shape science and engineering in the modern world. ([Eadie & Ghosh, 2011](#_ENREF_5)) .

This lesson focuses on the lotus effect found in nature, named for the Lotus leaf which demonstrates surfaces that are extremely water repellant and self-cleaning. ([Solga, Cerman, Striffler, Spaeth, & Barthlott, 2007](#_ENREF_12)) Animals, such as spiders and water striders ([Gao & Jiang, 2004](#_ENREF_6)), can be found with water repellant surfaces similar to that of the lotus plant, making them adapt to survive in damp conditions. ([Cerman, Striffler, & Barthlott, 2009](#_ENREF_3)) Other plant species, such as the water lettuce (*Pistia* *stratiotes* L.) also demonstrate these water repellent, or superhydrophobic, qualities with surface structures varied from that of the lotus plant. The surface of the water lettuce is covered in multicellular hairs that prevent water and dirt from ever reaching the surface of the leaf while the Lotus leaf has a rough surface that traps air preventing water from sticking to its surface. These qualities, among many more found in nature, are being studied and replicated on the nanoscale in order to create high-tech materials to aid in anything from non-stick ketchup bottles to ice repellent airplane wings.

**Activities**

This project will be a 5-E Lesson, Multimedia Lesson for high school science students. The primary subject that this lesson will focus on is biology, with supporting material from physical science/chemistry.

**Engage**: Students will be introduced to superhydrophobic surfaces through video clips of anti-sticking ketchup bottles comparing them to traditional ketchup bottles. Youtube link: <http://youtu.be/uPJa_eZBPGI> (Mac, 2012) The instructor will ask the following questions for discussion after viewing the video:

* How do you think this is possible?
* What do you think they did to the bottle to make it so slippery?
* How could this possibly be related to nature?
* What other areas of science could benefit from a technology like this?

The remainder of the lesson will seek to answer these questions.

**Explore**: Students will work in partners or groups (depending on class size) to investigate various surfaces (plastic, glass, aluminum, leaf samples, stain resistant pants/fabric, non-stain resistant fabric samples, etc…) and compare their water repellent qualities, or hydrophobicity using the **Student Investigation Sheet** provided.

Notes on collecting materials:

* Material samples may vary, but stain resistant fabric and no-stain resistant fabric are the best for real world connections to biomimicry technology.
* Choose at least one hydrophobic leaf such as the elephant ear, water lettuce, or lotus leaf. These are widely available and inexpensive at local garden shops, Home Depot, Lowes Hardware, or if you are lucky you can find samples out in nature depending on where you live.
* Additional leaf samples should include a “waxy” leaf such as a Magnolia in order to add variety to student predictions of water repellent qualities.
* Other surfaces such as aluminum foil, glass slides and plastic can be chosen based on availability. Feel free to incorporate any additional materials that have interesting surfaces to compare in this investigation.

Students will make predictions prior to beginning the investigation on how each material will interact with water. They should record all predictions and data collections in the chart provided on the Student Investigation Sheet. Following the initial investigation, students will observe these materials under the microscope and hand lens in order to collect further information about the surface and hypothesize why/how the surfaces behave the way that they do.

**Explain**: Students will view **The Lotus Effect R** PowerPoint presentation, presented by the instructor, with information regarding the science behind hydrophobic and superhydrophobic surfaces, including the micro- and nanostructures of these surfaces. Students will take notes using the **Guided Notes Handout** provided by the instructor. The “Lotus Effect” will be explained as well as its relation to the ketchup video in the Engage activity.

**Elaborate**: Students will read a story (See **Airplane Crash Reading** below) about an airplane crash that occurs due to wing icing. A class discussion will follow revolving around the ways in which superhydrophobic surfaces might help prevent airplane icing. Students will then research this, and other applications of superhydrophobic surfaces and materials. Research may be done online using internet sources. Encourage students to look for scholarly papers as well as news articles and journals. Students will be given a series of questions to guide their research in the **Superhydrophobic Surfaces Research Guide**.

Airplane Crash Reading: <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/29173163/ns/us_news-life/t/ntsb-crew-reported-ice-buildup-crash/#.V0nlsZErLIW>

Examples of online resources for student research include but are not limited to:

* <http://www.aopa.org/asf/publications/sa11.pdf>
* <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/images/lmk/Brian%20S/LMK_Icing_Show.pdf>
* <http://aircrafticing.grc.nasa.gov/courses.html>

**Evaluate**: Students will work together to come up with a proposal for either a new product or an existing product that can be improved by the use of biomimicry and super-hydrophobic surfaces. This product may deal with aircraft safety and icing or something completely different. Students should use the research that they did online to help come up with this new or improved product in order to “sell” the product to a panel of their peers. Students will present their proposal upon completion using the Presentation Rubric provided.

**Project Guide: Overview of requirements and outcomes.**

Student groups are allowed 45-90 minutes (depending on availability) to work towards creating a new or improved product that uses biomimicry and super-hydrophobic surfaces to improve the lives of humans.

Group members are expected to delegate responsibility amongst themselves and share workload equally. Possible roles that may be suggested to the groups may include recorder, graphic designer, researcher, technology guru, main presenter, etc…

Students should be encouraged to include visuals in their presentation that portrays the product that they are proposing. Images supporting the scientific evidence should also be included. Student groups should use online platforms to accompany the presentation and display the information provided about the product. Some suggested online platforms include:

* Glogster--<http://www.glogster.org/>
* Voki--<http://voki.com/>
* Animoto--<http://animoto.com/>
* Voicethread--<http://voicethread.com/>
* Prezi--<http://prezi.com/>

Students will present their proposal formally to their peers, who will use the provided rubric to assess their presentation. The instructor will also use this rubric to assess group presentations.

**Assessment**

* Rubric for presentation
* Post lab questions following laboratory exploration

**Modifications**

If online presentation applications such as Glogster or Voicethread are unavailable, traditional poster board and markers may be substituted as presentation visuals.

**Alternative Assessments**

Alternative assessments for learning disabilities or ESL students include:

* Alternative instructions may be provided in place of the rubric for students requiring additional help due to learning disability or language barriers.
* Post lab questions may be discussed as a class rather than answered individually for students that need differentiated assessment.

**Supplemental Information**

Further information on the lotus effect and its use in material design can be found at:

* <http://www.nanowerk.com/spotlight/spotid=19644.php>
* <http://www.asknature.org/strategy/714e970954253ace485abf1cee376ad8>

**Critical Vocabulary**

**Hydrophobic**: Lacking affinity for water.

**Hydrophilic**: Of, relating to, or having a strong affinity for water.

**Superhydrophobic**: Repelling water to the degree that droplets do not flatten but roll off instead

**Surface** **Icing**: The accumulation of ice on the outermost layer of something.

**Nanometer**: One billionth of a meter.

**Micrometer**: One millionth of a meter.

**Lotus Plant:** A water lily (Nelumbo nucifera, family Nelumbonaceae) of Asia and northern Australia, typically with dark pink or white-and-pink flowers.

**Websites**

Additional resource may be found on the web at:

* Biomimicry Institute: [htttp://biomimicry.net/](http://biomimicry.net/) This website provides detailed information about biomimicry with educator resources.
* Biomimicry Guild: <http://www.biomimicryguild.com/guild_biomimicry.html> This website provides information on biomimicry and its uses in today’s business market.

**Important!** An external website should not be *required* for a teacher to use your plan unless it is a highly stable, institutionally maintained resource.

**References**

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Mac, Vinnie. (2012, May 23). None Stick Ketchup Bottle Solution. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPJa\_eZBPGI&feature=youtu.be

Solga, A., Cerman, Z., Striffler, B. F., Spaeth, M., & Barthlott, W. (2007). The dream of staying clean: Lotus and biomimetic surfaces. [Article]. *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics, 2*(4), S126-S134. doi: 10.1088/1748-3182/2/4/s02

**Comments**

Teacher tips and helpful hints: Be certain to take time in between each activity to summarize and ensure that everyone understands the concepts that have been introduced. Each activity builds on the previous so it is imperative that students do not fall behind before moving forward.

**Author Information**

April King teaches at the Middle College at NC A&T in Guilford County Schools, Greensboro, NC. She teaches biology and chemistry in grades 9-12 and this is her 8th year teaching. She currently holds a B.S. in Biological Sciences from NC State University and a M.A.Ed in Science Education from East Carolina University. She is currently working towards a STEM teaching certificate through the NASA Endeavor Fellowship and is National Board Certified.

**Student Investigation Sheet**

**Introduction:** Scientific developments inspired by nature have resulted in some of the most influential inventions of our modern time. The inventor of Velcro was inspired by the burrs of plants that attach themselves to animal fur. Biomimicry, or biomimetics, is essentially taking inspiration from nature’s designs, models, and systems to enhance human designs or solve man’s problems. Besides Velcro, biomimicry has led to products such as stain resistant slacks, water resistant windshield coatings, self-cleaning paint, and non-stick containers. These inventions have been inspired by the evolution of organisms found in nature and continue to shape science and engineering in the modern world.

In today’s activity you will investigate a popular biomimicry topic, hydrophobic surfaces. Big word for a simple concept! Let’s break it down:

***Hydro***=water + ***phobic***=fearing

So, hydrophobic surfaces are just surfaces that “fear” or repel water! You have probably experienced some of these surfaces in your life and probably didn’t even realize it. Today, you and your partner/partners will examine several different surfaces, both man-made and natural, to determine their level of hydrophobicity.

**Materials**: Collect the following materials from your instructor

* Test samples (these will vary depending on availability)
* Pipet
* Beaker or cup of water
* Hand lens and/or microscope (when available)

**Procedure**: Follow the instructions below to complete your investigation

1. After collecting your materials, examine each sample thoroughly. You may use a hand lens, if available, to examine the samples more closely.
2. Make a prediction of how each sample’s surface will interact with water. Use the following terms to gauge your predictions:

**Hydrophilic**=Not water repellent at all. (Water droplets stick to surface, spread into a thin layer over the surface; droplets do not easily roll off of the surface, even when surface is tilted.)

**Hydrophobic**=Water repellent. (Water droplets adhere lightly but do not spread out much across the surface; droplets roll off of the surface when tilted.)

**Super-hydrophobic**=Extremely water repellent. (Water droplets do not adhere to the surface and remain in a tights bubble on the surface; droplets roll off easily when barely tilted.)

After forming your prediction of how each surface will interact with water, record your predictions using the vocabulary terms from above, in the **Data Collection Table.**

1. Next, you and your partner/partners will place water droplets, using the pipet, on the surface of each sample. Try to make each droplet as close to the same size as possible. Observe how the water interacts with the surface of each sample. Does it spread out immediately? Does it remain a bubbly sphere? Does it roll off when you tilt it? Record your observations in the Data Collection Table.
2. Record your final conclusion, using the criteria provided while you were making your predictions. Identify each sample as hydrophilic, hydrophobic, or super-hydrophobic in your conclusion.

**Data Collection Table**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Material Sample** | **Prediction** | **Observations** | **Conclusions** |
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1. After you have completed the water droplet tests respond to the following questions:
2. Were your predictions correct about the way that the droplets interacted with each surface?
3. Which surfaces surprised you? Explain.
4. What do you notice about the surfaces that repelled water the *best*? What do they have in common?
5. What do you notice about the surfaces that repelled water the *least*? What do they have in common?
6. Finally, examine each surface more closely using the hand lens and/or microscope to see if you can come up with some possible characteristics that result in hydrophobic or super-hydrophobic surfaces that you may not be able to see with the naked eye. Record any further observations in the space below:

**Magnified/Microscopic Observations:**

Think About it: How does this all relate to the video you watched on the new ketchup bottles?

**The Lotus Effect® PowerPoint Guided Notes Sheet**

**Biomimicry: Using Nature’s Design**

What is the Lotus Effect®?

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Why would a species need to be superhydrophobic? How could this benefit them?

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Make a list of species that you predict might need to be extremely water repellent.

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Why the Lotus Effect?

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Why do they do this?

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What’s surface roughness got to do with water repellence?

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Nano-what? So, the surface of these plants are rough on the nanoscale. What exactly does that mean?

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How can this help us?

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Biomimicry

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What other ways could we use this technology to make our lives easier, safer, or better?

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