The Hidden World of Trees

Trees give us oxygen to breathe and shade to keep us cool. But have you ever really gotten to know the trees near you?

NATURE INVESTIGATION

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Something to Write With
- A Tree

FIND A TREE AND GET STARTED:

- Make a sketch of your tree. Draw the shape of its trunk, branches, and canopy.
- Look for evidence of animals near your tree. Look closely for small insects and spiders. Look for signs that an animal has used your tree in the past like holes, nests, trails, or other animals signs. Sketch what you see.
- Investigate the health of your tree. Is it alive? How can you tell? Is it healthy? In what ways are people hurting or helping your tree?

WRITING PROMPT

Try writing a fictional story that takes place in a forest. The hero of your story needs to search the forest to find a special plant. Tell the story of their journey.

Here are a few questions to consider while you write:

- Why does your main character want the special plant? What makes it special?
- What does the forest in your story look like, sound like, smell like, and feel like?
- What types of plants and animals will your hero encounter on their journey?

Try using some of your scientific tree observations to describe the forest in your story. Using details from real life will help your story feel real. But, because this is a fiction story, you can also invent new details using your imagination.

SHARE YOUR WORK

We're excited to see what you write! A group of expert writers and scientists will review your work and select pieces to publish online this fall! In addition to being published, winners will also get to participate in an exclusive nature writing workshop!

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SLANT STUDENT LITERARY ARTISTS of NASHVILLE, TN
CUMBERLAND RIVER COMPACT
OUR WATER. OUR FUTURE.

Rainy Days

Rainy days are a great time to explore nature and to be inspired! Let's get our feet wet with a rainy day investigation.

NATURE INVESTIGATION

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Something to Write With
- Rain Gear

HEAD OUTSIDE AFTER IT RAINS OR WHEN IT IS LIGHTLY RAINING.

Safety first! Be sure to get permission from a parent and make sure you stay safe in the rain

- You will be investigating what happens to rain.
- Start by making some observations of the rainwater. Observations are what we notice when we use our five senses to see, touch, listen, smell, and (maybe!) taste. An example of an observation about water is "I notice that the rain is creating muddy spots in my yard."
- Write down three observations about rainwater:
- Where do you think the rainwater goes? Investigate by following the water and see if it flows somewhere specific.
- Need help?
    - Do you see water flowing up or downhill?
    - Where do you think it flows after it leaves your house, yard, or building?

WRITING PROMPT

We're often told to stay inside when it's raining, but today we're going to use poetry to break the rules a little. Write a poem about playing outside in the rain. (You don't need to actually go out and get wet if you don't want to. You can just imagine what you would like to do on a rainy day.) What would you do? Who would you play with? What are some fun things that you can only do in the rain?

- Remember, playing is something that you *do*, so use lots of action words to describe how you would play.
- Poems are a great time to use some creative language. Try using some creative language to describe how the rain looks, sounds, feels, and smells.
- Your poem does not need to rhyme, but it can if you want it to. Your poem can look and sound any way that you want. Have fun with it.

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Getting in Touch with Nature

Get in contact with nature by using your sense of touch to explore, discover, and remember experiences with the natural world.

Nature Investigation

Materials:

- Paper
- Something to Write With

Grab a notebook and go to an outdoor space that's familiar to you (your house, yard, school, park, etc):

Spend 10 minutes observing objects and their textures. Texture is a way to describe how a surface or object feels. Run your hand over the surfaces of objects. Press your palm to the ground. Try touching things with different parts of your hand. (The sensation you feel on the back of your hand is very different from what you feel through your fingertips.) Create an entry for each object in your notebook. Try to find words to describe how they feel. Be as specific as possible. A sidewalk and a tree might both feel "rough," but they are rough in different ways. You might also write down things that each texture reminds you of.

- How do man-made objects feel compared to objects that are part of nature?
- Can you tell what something is just by its texture? For example, do you know what grass feels like just by touch?
- Do the textures of tree bark help you figure out what types of trees they are? Can you come up with a name for the tree based on its texture?

Remember COVID-19 and be careful! Don't touch objects in public places that other people may have come in contact with, such as handrails and drinking fountains. Wash your hands thoroughly after collecting textures outside.

Writing Prompt

After you've gathered four or five textures from different objects, choose one to investigate further. If possible, go back to the object or surface and touch it again. Close your eyes. What memories does that texture bring to mind? Let your mind drift until a memory grabs you, then write about that memory in your notebook.

You can write about your memory in the form of a story or poem—there's no right or wrong way. If it's still within reach, as you write, occasionally reach out and touch the object or surface that inspired you. Feeling that texture as you write will help you feel connected to your memory in a physical way. Make use of that physical connection to explore the different senses in your memory. Try to capture all specific details you can remember, including details about what you were thinking and feeling.

Share Your Work

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SLANT Student Literary Artists of Nashville, TN

Cumberland River Compact
Our Water. Our Future.

Images and Imagination

Photos capture special moments in our lives and help us remember what we've experienced. Explore nature through the lens of a camera and discover stories hiding in your images.

NATURE INVESTIGATION

MATERIALS:

- Phone with Camera
- *Seek* App (available in Android or iOs)

TIME TO EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS

Explore the natural world by making photo observations! Spend 10 minutes outside taking photos of the living things you find. Look for plants in your yard, insects hiding under logs, birds in the trees, and any other living thing you can find. Check out this video for some tips that will help you get started.

Then, use the app *Seek* to upload and share observations of what you found. The application can help identify what you found or provide suggestions! You can start a challenge or collect photos on your own. (You can skip this step if you would like to just focus on taking photos of nature).

WRITING PROMPT

Give your picture voice! We've all seen movies and books with talking animals. When you are a creative writer, you have the power to give anything a voice. Even things like plants, rocks, or furniture might have something to say.

- To start this activity, choose one of the pictures you took during your science exploration. Take another close look at the picture. Notice all of the things you captured in the photo.
- Now it's time to get creative. Choose 1 or 2 plants in your photo and give them voices. For each plant, ask yourself, what would their personalities be like? What would they like or dislike? What would they want?
- Then write a poem or story about the plants in your picture.
- (If you want, you can write about more than just plants. You could give a voice to an animal, a rock, or even a cloud. Anything in your picture is fair game.)

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