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# Nature Journaling

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## Purpose:

- The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to be more aware of their surroundings. With the aid of drawing techniques and careful observations, students will gain the skills to create a nature journal to be shared with others.

## Objectives:

- Students will carefully observe a leaf of their choice to sketch using proper nature journaling format
- Students will write a story using creative writing techniques to personify a tree of their choice in response to one of three prompts

## Materials:

- Nature Journal Page Templates (provided)
- Draft Contour Drawing Sheet (provided)
- “Trees to Know in Oregon” book (provided)
- Key to Leaf Features and Shapes (provided)
- Tree Literature Samples (provided)
- Hand Lenses (not provided)

**Time Required:** 45 - 90 minutes

**Appropriate grades:** 3rd - 8th

**NGSS and Common Core Standards:**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

## Activity:

<b>Introduction</b>	Have the students to place their leaf on the corner of their desk, as they will be working with them in a few minutes. Project a picture of an outdoor scene or provide students with a physical copy of the picture. After they’ve had a minute or two to observe the picture, ask the students to share their observations and what details stuck out to them. Record them on the board for all students to
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	<p>see.</p> <p>Explain that naturalists make constant observations about the world, and that they often record their observations in a Nature Journal. A Nature Journal contains sketches and words to help record all the beautiful things you have seen and learned. Inform the students that they will be learning some sketching techniques to help them create a Nature Journal page.</p> <p>Invite students to loosen up their creative brains by doing a few practice sketches. Hand out the Draft Contour Drawing sheet. Explain that they will make two drawings of their own hand.</p> <p>Show them how to pose their non-dominant hand in a relaxed fist, so that they can see their own nails and palm. Guide them in imagining that an ant is slowly crawling around the outline of their hand, around the edges, down along the fingers, around the nails.</p> <p>On the Draft Contour Drawing sheet, students should let the pencil point follow the imaginary ant as it walks around each finger, back and forth along wrinkles, and finally back down the wrist. Remember that the ant is only able to walk around the outline of things, and the pencil should follow that same shape without lifting off the paper.</p> <p>Ask the students to make the first drawing of their hand without looking at the paper. Spend about two minutes doing this. Explain that since they weren't looking, the drawings will look funny. This is okay - it's just practice!</p> <p>Now they will do the second hand sketch, using exactly the same technique as before, but this time, they can look back and forth between hand and paper. Keep pencils on the paper, following the ant, but now try to include more details. This is the technique they will use to sketch their leaf.</p>
<b>Body</b>	<p>Hand out the Nature Journaling template. Explain that their page will be more than just a sketch. A good nature page should include observations, personal notes, science terms, zoomed-in sections, and any questions that come to mind. Make a note of the zoom circle. Explain how to use the circle, to "blow-up" an area of their picture, and sketch that area in even more detail.</p> <p>Pass out the hand lenses and explain how to use them for the close-up drawing. Hand out the Key to Leaf Features and Shapes. Explain that once they have sketched their leaf, they will search through the key to identify important</p>



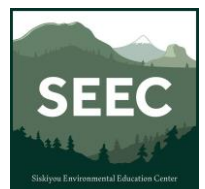
	<p>features of their particular leaf or needle.</p> <p>Guide students through filling out the written sections of the journal page. (Name, Date, Location of Tree, and Adjectives). Make sure that they understand the importance of recording information in case they, or anyone else, wanted to interpret their drawing later. Students can save writing questions and labeling their sketch until they have finished drawing.</p> <p>Now let the students sketch their leaf. They should still use the ant-walking technique for contour drawing, but they can look back and forth at their paper. Allow the students time to draw, examine the key, and label their diagrams with the correct vocabulary terms. For those who finish early, ask that they use the “Trees to Know in Oregon handbook”, to determine the name of their tree species.</p>
<b>Closure</b>	<p>When most students are finished with their diagram, or with about ten minutes remaining, allow time for students to look at each other’s work. Find out whether they are impressed with the quality of the products, and whether they might try some nature sketching again on their own.</p> <p>Encourage students to continue to use the observations skills they practiced today. There is a lot to be gained when we take time to look closely and appreciate the small things that make up the big picture of our surroundings.</p>

## Extension:

Depending on time and the writing skills of your class, you can follow this activity with a creative writing activity that will delight their imaginations, and connect students even more deeply with their tree. You may select one or more of the Tree Literature Samples to share with your class. You can either read an age-appropriate sample out-loud, or pass them out for analysis. Each sample demonstrates powerful description or personification of trees.

Propose a homework assignment to be submitted with their Nature Journal page. Students should spend at least 15 minutes sitting quietly with their tree, observe closely with their senses, and let their imaginations go. After that, students may write on one of the following prompts:

1. Imagine that you are the tree. Write a diary entry about an exciting or important day in your life. Use the word “I” to describe what happens to you and how you feel.



2. If your tree could change into a person, what kind of person would it be? Describe how he or she would look. What kind of personality would it have?
3. Imagine and then describe a conversation with your tree. What would you ask? Your tree has probably lived a lot longer than you. What advice could it give you?

## Modifications:

- **Lower Elementary:**

- If freehand drawing is frustrating for the students, leaves may be traced to provide more accurate shapes.

- **Middle School:**

- Challenge students to create a page in their Nature Journal for an animal, a plant, and a rock
- Take students on a walk/hike and have them practice their nature journaling skills in real time

