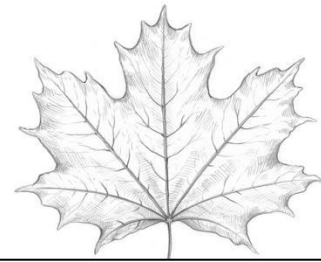

Nature Journaling

Connecting Creatively with Trees



Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to engage their creativity, sensory skills, and creative writing skills, while making observations of their natural surroundings. This activity provides resources to assist students in examining leaf shapes and describing their characteristics using accurate vocabulary.

Objectives:

Students will produce a labeled sketch of their leaf, using careful observation and artistic skills.

Students will write a nature journal entry using creative writing skills.

Materials:

Provided

- Nature Journal Page Templates
- Draft Contour Drawing Sheet
- Trees to Know in Oregon (book)
- Key to Leaf Features and Shapes
- Tree Literature Samples

Not Provided

- Leaf samples
- Hand lenses

Time Required: 45-90 minutes

Appropriate grades: 3rd-8th

NGSS and Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

3-LS3-2 Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.

Other Considerations: This activity works best if the students can connect independently with a tree of their own acquaintance. This lesson may be broken up into multiple days. On the day before performing this activity, ask students to bring in a leaf from their favorite tree. If a student does not have a favorite tree, he or she should collect a leaf from a tree in their neighborhood or school yard. Have a sample of leaves available for those students who do not bring in a leaf.



Activity:

Introduction 10 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Read tree literature sample “The Ancient One” and/or “The Tree”2) Ask students what they think the storyteller is trying to convey?3) How do trees provide for us? What ecological services do they provide? (Shade, Food, Shelter, Oxygen etc.)
Body 30-40 minutes	<p>Part 1: Sketching Skills (10 minutes)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Ask the students to place their leaf on the corner of their desk, as they will be working with them in a few minutes.2) 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.3) Inform the students that they will be learning some sketching techniques to help them create a Nature Journal page.4) First, 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.5) 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.6) 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.7) 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.8) Ask the students to make the first drawing of their hand without looking at the paper. Spend about two minutes doing this.9) Explain that since they weren’t looking, the drawings will look funny. This is still a fun warm-up for their creative brains.10) 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.



11) This is the technique they will use to sketch their leaf.

Part 2: Nature Journaling (25 minutes)

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Pass out the hand lenses (if you have them), and explain how to use them for the close-up drawing.
- 4) 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 features of their particular leaf or needle.
- 5) 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. They can do the questions and the labeling at the end.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Allow the students time to draw, examine the key, and label their diagrams with the correct vocabulary terms.
- 8) For those who finish early, ask that they use the Trees to Know in Oregon handbook to determine the name of their tree species.
- 9) 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.
- 10) Ask them to share one aspect that they liked about their sketch and one thing they might change in the future. Ask them what they might want to sketch next?

Part 3: Creative Writing (25 minutes)

- 1) 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.



	<p>2) You may select one or more of 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.</p> <p>3) Students should spend at least 15 minutes sitting quietly with their tree, observing closely with their senses, and let their imaginations go.</p> <p>4) After that, students may write on one of the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imagine that you are the tree. Think about how old you think your tree might be, and what it may have seen in its lifetime. 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. ● If your tree could change into a person, what kind of person would it be? Describe how they would look. What kind of personality would it have? ● 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?
<p>Closure 15 minutes</p>	<p>Ask students to do a think-pair-share about their favorite tree and why. What qualities does it possess that drew you to it? What does your tree provide for you? Food? Shade? Shelter? A place to play?</p> <p>Ask students to share why they are grateful for their tree, and what they might do for their tree in return.</p>

Modifications:

- **Elementary:** Focus more on the artistic and observational portion of the lesson, leaving out the creative writing piece.
- **Middle School:** Assign creative writing homework portion of the lesson plan.
- **High School:** Place more emphasis on the proper journaling technique and assign creative writing homework portion of the lesson plan.

