

THREE NATURE ACTIVITIES BASED ON THOREAU'S WORK.

INTRODUCTION

These activities were inspired by Henry Thoreau and the Waldon Pond Project. Students will utilize observation skills, notebook practice, and journaling to learn more about their environment in these activities. Worksheets for each day's activities are provided. Each student will, hopefully, become more conscious of the natural environment around them and play an active role in protecting it.

Students' observation skills will be focused on the first day. Not only will they be outside, students will be learning about what is in the environment around them. They will take notes and do a quick sketch of a particular area in the school grounds that they found interesting. Students need to be encouraged to focus on a small area and give as much detail as possible. Today's work will be utilized in the following day's activities.

“What is interesting about the area you selected? Pick something that you sense here which will remind you of the place later.”

The second day will rely on the prior day's work to create a journal entry. Writing down observations with detailed information is an important skill that students need to develop. Students should also focus on the way nature impacted them and what they learned from it. The journal entry should be at least a page long. Students can be encouraged to share their journal entries with the class or in small groups.

The third days will be devoted to identification of the organism found in the area. Put students into groups based on the type of organism selected such as plants, fungi, insects, etc. The teacher should provide the students with field guides or computers and students for identification and research. Students should have ample time to just browse in these books and try to locate their subject.

A possible worksheet for this activity is provided. Another approach is to allow students to teach the class about the organism in any format that they choose. Poster, video, brochure, even a play can be done depending on the time allotted for this activity. It is important that a copy of the work is handed in and shared with the class.

An exit card option would be to ask the students what they learned from listening to the presentations.

Students will learn about the biodiversity during this activity. They will see that each organism has not only a common name but also a scientific name. They will learn whether an organism is indigenous to the area and a little about its life cycle. Students will use this information to conclude whether it is a beneficial organism in the area surrounding the school.

The students will obtain an appreciation of nature from these activities. Students will get to see the variety of organisms that exist around them. Hopefully, each student will look more closely at what is around her or him. The appreciation of nature will result in recognizing the impact we have on nature and nature has on us.

Day 1

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

We will go outside today. We will stay around the school. While you are there, take a few minutes to observe your surrounding. What kind of day is it? What is the temperature? What sounds do you hear? What kind of things do you see? Select one area that contains a natural environment. Spend a few minutes looking at what is there.

Draw a small sketch of the area. Select one thing that you find particularly interesting and draw it with as much details as you can.

Make some notes about the area that you feel will help you remember it. Be as specific as you can: ask the teacher to help you if you have difficulties. Try to identify as many things as you find her. (Refer to the observation questions for ideas.)

Day 2

NATURE JOURNAL ENTRY

Read the quote below for inspiration in today's assignment.

“ How much beauty in decay! I pick up a white oak leaf, dry and stiff, but yet mingled red and green, October-like, whose pulpy part some insect has eaten beneath, exposing the delicate network of its veins. It is very beautiful held up to the light, - such work as only an insect eye could perform. Yet, perchance, to the vegetable kingdom such a revelation of ribs is as repulsive as the skeleton in the animal kingdom. In each case it is some little gourmand, working for another end, that reveals the wonders of nature. There are countless oak leaves in this condition now, and also with a submarginal line of network exposed. “

October 18, 1855 journal entry found in I to Myself, an annotated selection from the journal of Henry D. Thoreau edited by Jeffrey S. Cramer

Referring to the sketch and notes from the other day, write a journal entry about yesterday's outing.

Day 3

ORGANISM

IDENTIFICATION

Type of subject: _____
Picture/drawing _____

Common name _____

Scientific name _____

Place where it originates from _____

Life cycle _____

Interesting information about it _____

Reason it was selected _____

Do you think it is beneficial here? ___ Yes ___ No Why? _____
