



Title: Meet A Tree

Adapted from *Glacier Teacher's Guide: Glacier National Park*, National Park Service.

Theme: It is important to use all of your senses when observing the natural world.

Objectives:

- Students will use senses other than sight to observe, describe, and recognize a tree.
- Students will become familiar with differences and similarities between trees.

Duration: 30-45 minutes

Age Range: Kindergarten-8th Grade

Materials:

- Blindfolds (1 per student)
- Scratch paper (optional)
- Pencils (optional)

Background:

This activity is meant to foster sensory exploration of the natural world and encourage students to use all of their senses to increase their awareness of the environments around them. By gaining hands-on experience with natural objects, students will be prepared for future lessons about ecosystems and habitats.

Preparation:

Choose an area with a diversity of trees and few or no hazards (large roots, holes, etc.)

Introduction:

Ask students to think about their favorite tree. It could be a type of tree (i.e. apple tree if they love to eat apples), a specific living tree (i.e. their favorite climbing tree), or a tree from a movie or book. Have students describe their tree to the group. You may also choose to have them quickly sketch their tree. Ask students to think about what that tree feels, smells, sounds, and maybe even tastes like – not only what it looks like. Explain that sight is only one of our senses and it is important to use other senses when observing nature.

Activities & Procedures:

Have students sit in a circle. Explain to students that they are going to explore a new tree today and that you are going to test how well they can examine a tree without their sense of sight. Choose a volunteer and demonstrate how you will lead blindfolded students carefully to their trees. With the volunteer, show the students how to carefully and slowly move about a tree, always keeping one hand on its trunk. Remind students to touch the tree, smell the tree, listen to the sounds of the tree and surrounding area. This will only be possible if students remain quiet throughout the whole activity. Tell students that when they have memorized the feel, smell, and sounds of their tree, they will need to sit quietly at the base of the tree with their blindfold on and think of a descriptive name for their tree (i.e. Fuzzy Bark).

Once you have given the above directions and addressed any student questions or concerns, have all students put on blindfolds; check the blindfolds to make sure they are secure and comfortable. Carefully lead each student to a tree. This activity will be easier for the students if you lead them to unique trees – multiple trunks, mossy spots, exposed roots, holes in the trunk, skinny trunks, wide trunks, etc. Place each student's hands on his or her tree and warn him or her of any hazards like low-hanging branches. Remind students to stay quiet, keep their blindfolds on, and memorize the details of the tree, and that when they are done they should quietly sit at the base of the tree and think of a name for it. Give students a few minutes to sit at the trunk before carefully bringing them back to your beginning circle. Once all students have returned have them remove their blindfolds.

(Note: If the group can handle it, you can expedite the activity by having students work in partners. Have each group designate "Partner A" and "Partner B." Instruct all of the Partner B students to put on their blindfolds and all of the Partner A students to carefully lead their Partner B to a tree. At this point, all of the Partner B's will be quietly observing their trees. Partner A's should then put on their blindfolds and you will carefully need to lead them to their own trees. Once this is complete, you can start bringing Partner B's back to the beginning circle and then bring Partner A's back.)

Send students back out to find their tree. Give hints to students that are having trouble. Ask students to make sure it is their tree by sitting in the same spot against the trunk – does it feel, smell, and sound right? Confirm that all students have found their tree, and then assign students to partners or small groups. Each group should tour the trees in their group, with each student describing his or her tree, pointing out special aspects of it, showing where he or she sat, and explaining the tree's name.

Wrap-up:

Have students share what they noticed about the forest and individual trees when they were blindfolded. Ask them to explain how senses other than sight helped them to understand their tree. Talk about how trees are different based on type of tree, age, where it is living, what is eating it, etc.

Evaluation:

Use student observations of their trees as a formative assessment. Note student behavior during the activity to assess their following of directions.

Meet A Tree

Science As Inquiry and Process: Students develop an understanding of the processes and applications of scientific inquiry.

SA1

Students develop an understanding of the processes of science used to investigate problems, design and conduct repeatable scientific investigations, and defend scientific arguments

The student demonstrates an understanding of the processes of science by:

[3] SA1.2 observing and describing the student's own world to answer simple questions

SA2

Students develop an understanding that the processes of science require integrity, logical reasoning, skepticism, openness, communication, and peer review.

The student demonstrates an understanding of the attitudes and approaches to scientific inquiry by:

[3] SA2.1 answering "how do you know?" questions with reasonable answers

History and Nature of Science: Students develop an understanding of the history and nature of science.

SG4

Students develop an understanding that advancements in science depend on curiosity, creativity, imagination, and a broad knowledge base.

The student demonstrates an understanding that advancements in science depend on curiosity, creativity, imagination, and a broad knowledge base by:

[3] SG4.1 asking questions about the natural world