



Root River Hike Pre-visit

Classroom Activity

Brief Synopsis:

One doesn't need to be on a nature hike to appreciate their surroundings. The students' world, both at school and at home, will be the focus of these activities. Students will practice the art of reflection and everyday discovery on new levels.

Ages: Designed for 4th–8th grades

Activity Lengths:

Activity 1: 10-15 minutes once a day or week

Activity 2: 30-45 minutes

Materials:

Activity 1: *Reflections*

- Pencils
- Journal or other space to reflect
- Outside destination (optional)
- Reflection questions

Activity 2: *Microhabitat Hunt*

- Worksheets
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Outdoor destination
- Clipboard or other hard surface for drawing
- Magnifying glasses (optional)
- Camera (optional)

Vocabulary:

Reflection, phenology, environment, nature, microhabitat

Outcomes:

1. Students will gain a better appreciation for their surroundings.
2. Students will be better able to reflect on a subject and explore new ways to appreciate situations and settings.
3. Students will learn that habitats exist on many levels.

Activity 1: Reflections

Background:

The world around us is an amazing, interesting place. Too often we are preoccupied and don't take the time to notice its wonder. By creating a set time and space for reflection, individuals learn how to appreciate their surroundings.

Procedures:

There are many options for leading reflection in the classroom. Listed below are a few ideas:

- Pick one question and have the students answer it at a set time (each morning, once a week, etc.). Reflections can be made on an individual basis in a journal or writing assignment.
- Have each student pick a spot outside where they reflect. They can return to this same spot or pick a different place for future reflections.
- Together as a class, keep track of seasonal changes happening out of a classroom window. Following the phenology, defined as the science dealing with the influence of climate on the recurrence of such annual phenomena of animal and plant life as budding and bird migrations, of an area can offer insight to changes in the world around you.

Discussion:

While it is not necessary to review the reflections students have, it can be interesting and create more excitement for future reflections. Students will love the chance to share their thoughts.

Questions for Reflection:

- How did you experience nature today?
- What changes have you seen outside?
- Describe the weather today.
- How do you enjoy nature?
- What do you like about the outdoors?
- How do you impact the environment on a daily basis?
- Describe your favorite nature place.
- Look around you/outside. What do you see?
- What animals did you see today/this week?

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Activity 2: Microhabitat Hunt

Background: So often we are focused only on the big scale and neglect the smaller, hard to see aspects of the world. This activity will encourage students to get down on their hands and knees and see just what lives on the ground where we walk.

Procedures:

1. Make photocopies of both worksheets. Worksheet one requires students to cut out the darkened square inside the dotted line. Try to leave the white space on the outside of the paper in tact.
2. Bring the students to an area that they can explore. It is not necessary to bring them to a park; however, if one is nearby that is a great option! Allow students to pick an area to investigate.
3. Have the students lay the sheet of paper with the inside cut out on their selected microhabitat. Then should examine the area within the cutout square to see what is inside. Students should draw what they see on Worksheet 2. The space for drawing on worksheet two is the exact size as the area cut out on worksheet 1, thus the drawings can be to scale.
4. The questions on the side of Worksheet 2 should be answered and will help guide students in their exploration.
5. Students can present their microhabitat upon returning to the classroom.

Discussion:

The microhabitats that students investigated are distinct, even if they all were located in the same field. It is important to recognize these differences on a small scale. Allow students to present their plot of land and describe what they found on it.

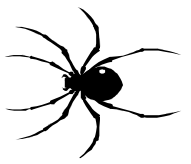
Optional questions for discussion include:

- What can we learn from this type of investigation?
- Do you think you saw all there was in that microhabitat? What else was there that you didn't see?
- What would you expect to find if you looked 2 inches deeper?

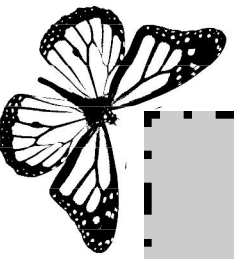
Teacher Tips

- A set schedule for reflection will encourage students to ponder subjects or make observations on a regular basis. It can also become a time they look forward to!
- Giving students clear boundaries will make outside activities easier to manage.
- Rocks or other heavy objects might be useful for preventing worksheet one from blowing away.
- Clipboards or another form of hard surface to write on will be helpful during the Microhabitat Hunt.





Cut out gray colored square.



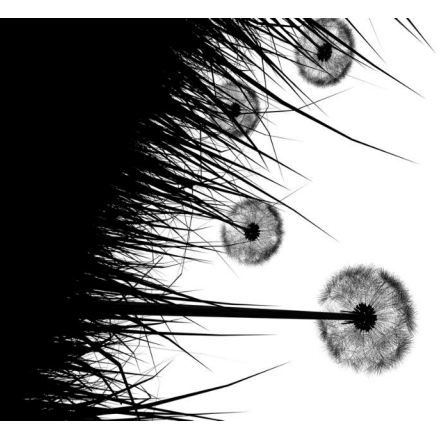
Microhabitat Hunt! *Worksheet One*

It's time to explore the world around you! Place this sheet of paper (with the square cut out) onto an area you are curious about...pick anything from a section of green grass, a fallen tree, or an area of the garden!

Carefully observe the area.

- Are there critters living in the area?
- What types of plants can you find?
- Is the ground covered in rocks, soil, snow, or sand?

Draw what you see on your worksheet!



Microhabitat Hunt! *Worksheet two*

Name: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____



What did you find that was alive?

What did you find that was non-living?

What did you find that was once alive, but is no longer?

Describe the surface of the area you are investigating.

What colors do you see?

Other observations:

