

Two Nature Journal Activities

Adapted from NHMLA School Programs

Journals are where we record observations, questions, and thoughts about what we see and experience. Nature journaling helps us to look more closely at organisms, describe a plant or animal, and to recognize a personal connection with nature. Here are two journaling activities for all ages that may be done indoors or outdoors.

Journal Activity #1

On a piece of paper, have students record their name and the date, time, and location. If they are outside, also include the weather. Take a few seconds to complete that information.

Next, have students find a plant or animal that is interesting to them. Maybe they had an experience with it before or maybe it is their first time seeing see that plant or animal. Once they find their specimen, ask them to sketch and describe it (they can use single words or write out full sentences). Encourage students to sketch to the best of their ability, and to try to focus on the process of drawing, rather than the result.

After you are done, consider or discuss:

- What did you experience during this exercise?
- Were you surprised/disappointed by anything?
- Would anyone like to share their descriptions?

Journal Activity #2 (Can be used independently, or as a follow-up to Activity #1)

Have your students think about a past experience they have had with a plant or animal. Ask them to close their eyes and take a few quiet seconds to picture the memory of that plant or animal. When they open their eyes, spend three minutes free-writing about that memory.

Tell students not to worry about telling the perfect story or using the perfect words, just brain dump that moment onto the paper. If they get stuck, it is no big deal—if they need to, write about getting stuck!

After the 3 minute writing period is over, have students shake out their hands and stretch their arms, then read over what they wrote and underline words or phrases that pop out to them.

Have students take another 3 minutes to free write on a new piece of paper— and if there is time go for a third round.

Wrap Up

Have a reflective discussion about the journaling activity:

- What did you experience during this writing part of the journaling?
- Would anyone like to share something they wrote?
- What do you think of your writing?

References

- [Opening the World Through Nature Journaling, Laws & Breunig](#)
- [Into the Field, Leslie, Tallmadge and Wessels](#)