

New Jersey School of Conservation
Friends of NJSOC
Branchville, New Jersey

**Nature Art and Poetry
Session Outline**

Objectives:

To provide students an opportunity to be in an outdoor setting to acquaint themselves with what they see, feel, smell and hear in the natural environment around them and begin to develop/increase their knowledge, appreciation and respect for the environment.

To give students an opportunity to explore the outdoor setting with the guidance of discovery cards.

To increase student awareness of the detail in which they can describe a chosen object.

To provide students with time to create ephemeral art.

To develop with students types of poetry that give voice to nature art.

Provide students with an opportunity to create poetry that: expresses the art they created, or expresses the process of creating their art or what it is like to spend time outdoors in their special place.

To encourage school staff to photograph student art and poetry as an effort to make their ephemeral art last.

Activity brief:

This class is based on *Voices from the Land*, a program/workshop designed by the Monarch Teacher Network.

The goal is to “help students develop a relationship with and respect for the natural world, as well as for other people and cultures”.

This activity allows students to briefly explore a natural area, settle themselves into a particular spot within that area, reflect on the natural materials and create ephemeral art using materials found there. In addition, create poetry that expresses the “voice” of the art, the experience of creating the art or what it is like to spend time in the natural environment while creating their art. Recommended time: 1.5-2 hours.

Materials needed:

Discovery cards, natural materials arranged into art, white board, samples of ephemeral art, marker, pads or clipboard with paper, pencils,

Suggested Procedures:

1. Introduction:

Begin the session briefly describing what they will be doing. You could generally say that they will be making observations of the natural environment, creating art and putting a voice to their art.. Explain what ephemeral art is... (a work of art that only occurs once) use some examples of Voices art or Andy Goldsworthy's art.

Tell them that the natural area you take them to will be their canvas! Their art will remain in that location. 5 minutes

2. Prepping for the poetry portion of the class:

Using an example of ephemeral art displayed on a table (could be a branch with pebbles arranged on/around it), have students describe what they see in a quick observation. Begin a visual list of their observations in chunks of words, not full sentences.

Then, give students a little more time to silently look more deeply at the art (maybe 10 seconds). Again, list their observations.

Then, challenge them to look again, what other descriptive things can they say about the art? List them. If their observations were largely visual, ask students what they hear from the art...what they might feel from the art if they could touch it, what scent might the art give off? List all observations. You could also try to draw out how the art feels. See example. 10 minutes.

3. Then, together, ask them to build/construct a voice the art may be speaking. Tell them they can use words/phrases from the list. See example. 5-10 minutes.

4. Provide additional ways the voice of the art could be arranged. The voice could be saying: *I remember...* OR a *who, what, when, where, why* voice... OR *question poems*... Briefly have students construct a sample of their choosing.

See sample poems on separate page. You may choose to read the examples. 10 minutes.

5. Suggest to students that the voice of the art should have a strong ending, or a surprise ending as if to make a point....ask how the use of punctuation changes the voice. 5 min.

6. Go outdoors:

Take the students on a Discovery Walk using the Cards. You could hand a card to one student and ask them to read it to the group. Then allow students to move around a bit to observe their surroundings looking for what the card asked them to find (they could do it as partners). For example: Find the biggest and the smallest tree. What do they have in common/what is different?

Complete enough Discovery cards until you feel the group is really beginning to observe the landscape in a deeper way than just casually noticing their surroundings.
10-15 minutes

7. Settling into a space:

Take them to a location where the art is to be created and provide them with a boundary of the area you want them to stay within. Direct them to walk around a bit in an effort to find a place that speaks to them, to look at the materials available and think about how they might use those materials. Guide them with some thoughts: imagine how the art they are going to create will look on the “canvas”. How big/small of a space does your art require? How will your art look from different angles, or in different light, or on the color of the surface the art is made on? What is your art saying to you as you create it? 5 minutes

8. Materials available for the art

Tell students they may use materials found on the ground, but not to use living things for their art. Exceptions could be if the material is an invasive species, non native or very common. Site check the area ahead of time. 5 minutes

9. Make the art

Time-wise it may be best if students work as a pair depending on the size of the group. Tell students not to make art that looks like real or man-made objects. So don't make a building, playground, animal, heart or tree, etc. Think about the size of the art, it doesn't have to be huge, it can be small, miniature in size. Keep the kids mindful of safety if breaking fallen sticks, picking up rocks, etc. 10-15 minutes

10. Craft the Poetry

Remind students how they began the process of writing the poetry by making a list of phrases and words. Finding the right words and organizing them in the right place...much like they did with their art...is key.

*provide them with a clipboard, pad and pencil

*have students make a list of observations about their art

*group the words/phrases into a voice for the art

*ask them to avoid trying to use rhyming patterns

*how they incorporate punctuation, if any

*how will the ending of the poem make the listener feel

*poems can be free flowing and don't have to follow standard forms taught in school

*10-15 minutes (students may feel this is way too much time OR not enough time)

11. Sharing

Once everyone has completed their poems begin the sharing process by moving to each creation and listening to the voice of the art. Encourage students to remain quiet for 5 seconds after each poem is read. 10-15 minutes

12. Photographs by staff can be taken for future reference and used back at school.

Summary:

How has creating art and putting poetry to the art help you in your knowledge and understanding of the space you were working in?

How might your experience creating art and poetry help you when you visit other natural environments?

Name two ways you grew in developing art and writing poetry.

10 minutes

Robin Anderson 7/2022



Discovery cards-laminate, cut, hole punch and clip together

<p>Find one kind of food for a bird, a mouse and another animal.</p>	<p>Find two different natural objects that might be recognized by touch. Try them with a partner to see if they can tell what it is.</p>
<p>Find two different kinds of natural objects that hold tight to something else.</p>	<p>Find a tree with “character”. Write a description of the tree so that someone else might recognize it. Be ready to act out that description.</p>
<p>Find something that creeps along the forest floor, or climbs a tree. Describe its motion and be ready to act it out.</p>	<p>Find two different kinds of evidence that insects have been at work. Do any of them appear to be the work of many insects working together?</p>
<p>Pretend you are an insect. Find a place that would serve as a shelter from winter storms and cold. What is it like there?</p>	<p>Walk a short distance and notice what “catches your eye”. What is it that attracted your attention to them?</p>
<p>Find 3 different types of seeds (at least two of which travel by different methods). Is their parent or method of travel nearby?</p>	<p>Find three different kinds of evidence that wind or running water has been at work. Be ready to act out that motion.</p>
<p>Find the biggest and smallest trees. Describe ways they are the same and tell how they are different.</p>	<p>Find two places that would best protect a bird during a winter storm. What is it like there?</p>

<p>Find a boulder or rock with “character”. Describe its character and what it sees. Does anything live on or near it?</p>	<p>Find a tree trunk that is smooth. Close your eyes and slowly run your hands along the trunk. Describe what you feel. Do the same thing for a tree trunk that has rough bark.</p>
<p>Find a tree or plant that has been damaged. Can you tell what caused the damage, or find evidence that the damaged area is used by other living things?</p>	<p>Find evidence of two different kinds of animals in your area. Can you identify the kind of animal from the “sign” it left behind?</p>
<p>Find a rock to observe and record a list of quantitative information (numbers) about it; also record qualitative information (describe it in words).</p>	<p>Visit an area of sun and an area of shade. Place your hand on different surfaces in each area. What do those surfaces feel like?</p>
<p>Walk around a bit to see how many colors of the rainbow you can find. What color was the most prominent? What color was hardest to find?</p>	<p>Scoop up a bit of soil. Look at it closely. What is it made of? How does it feel when you rub a little of it between your fingers. How would you describe the smell of the soil?</p>
<p>If there is a natural water source nearby, sit down for a moment and close your eyes. What do you hear?</p>	<p>Without speaking, walk a short distance and listen to the sounds coming from under your feet. Describe those sounds. What made those sounds quiet or noisy?</p>