

Lesson at a Glance: Nature Observation

Part 1: Understanding Observation

Practicing Observation

1. Take students to an outdoor location with a science notebook and let them know that they will be practicing making observations.
2. Have students close their eyes and when they open them have them look around and make as many observations as they can in 20 seconds. Tell them to make a mental note of everything that they observe.
3. When time is up, have students record everything that comes to mind. Ask students to share out.
4. **Ask:** *what makes someone a good observer?* Have students turn and talk.
5. Share the Sherlock Holmes quote: “I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see”. Ask students to share what it means to them.
6. Talk to students about how we often do not notice what is around us and they are going to learn some strategies by using all of their senses.
7. Have students turn and talk about the 5 senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, & hearing. Let them know that they are going to do an activity using 3 of these senses.

Part 2: Leaf in a Bag

Mystery Plant

1. Pass out “mystery bags” to students and tell them that their challenge will be to figure out what is inside using only their sense of feel, sight and hearing. Have students find a partner.
2. Encourage students to describe with detail. Have them split their paper in half using one side for words and another for drawing.
3. **Ask students:**
 - *Can you distinguish the veins? What do they feel like?*
 - *What can you say about the edges? Has a critter been nibbling on the edges?*
 - *What might it sound like if you crushed it?*
 - *Is it smooth & waxy or dry & rough?*
 - *Is it bigger than your hand?*
4. After students have explored and recorded their observations have them look for their plants in a designated area. When they believe they have located their plant they can then open their bag and compare.
5. Have students record any additional observations and/or use field guides or iNaturalist to learn more about their plants.
6. **Discuss:**
 - *How was this harder or easier than you thought it would be?*
 - *What did you find out? Were there any surprises?*
7. *Have students share their work and their leaves to compare experiences. Talk about how much they have been able to learn about just one leaf. Allow students to continue exploring if time allows.*

Final Reflection:

- *Do you feel like better observers? Why or why not?*
- *What helped you be successful today?*