

My Book of Trees

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Summary

Students create personal tree field guides.

Grade level

First

Time required

Two to three class periods and one field trip (optional)

Materials

Tree field guides

[Trees of the Flathead Indian Reservation document](#)

[Student tree fact pages 1 & 2](#)

Grade appropriate trade books on trees

Tree posters, tree pictures, tree books

“The Legend of the Cedar Tree” (see Resources section for web address)

Science journals

Goals

By completing this lesson, students will

- 1) gain experience in using research skills
- 2) learn about specific characteristics of trees and
- 3) create their own taxonomy for use in their personal tree field guides.

Science standards addressed

National Science Standards

- Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- Characteristics of organisms
- Form and function
- Properties of objects and materials

American Indian Science Standards

- The innate properties of objects and materials that were (and are) recognized by traditional Native American cultures in the manufacture and use of specific tools and material objects that capitalize upon those properties

Teacher tips

Provide the file “Trees of the Flathead Indian Reservation” included with this lesson, as well as tree trade books and field guides for use by students in completing their tree research. Also, bookmark Internet sites that contain tree information.

Pre cut field guide pages (in leaf or tree shapes if desired). Make copies of the tree facts pages, at least 10 per student.

Select a convenient local site for a field trip, and invite a local community resource person to accompany the class on field trip. Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes’ Tribal Forestry and Natural Resource Departments would both have staff that could participate (alternatives could include park rangers, National Forest Service personnel, local greenhouse or nursery staff).

Learn the traditional Cherokee story “The Legend of the Cedar Tree” so it can be told to students, rather than read, in keeping with oral tradition (see Resources section).

Background information

The Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai Tribes utilize many different tree species for cosmetic and utilitarian items as well as foods and medicines. The trunks of Lodgepole Pine trees, which grow relatively straight, are used as tipi (lodge) poles. Cedar and birch trees are used in making baskets, and Mountain Alder bark makes a reddish dye that in times past was often utilized for highlighting the hair of men and women. Willow is used for making sweathouse frames and fish traps. The bark of different species is used to make medicine for cuts, eyewash, diarrhea, and the flu. For more information on traditional uses, consult the “Trees of the Flathead Indian Reservation” file, included with this lesson.

Procedure

Engagement

- 1) Tell the traditional Cherokee story, “The Legend of the Cedar Tree” to students and discuss.
- 2) Ask students to think about a favorite tree and draw a picture of it. Have students write a short story about their favorite tree.

Exploration

- 1) Allow students to explore a variety of books on trees with the goal of selecting at least eight trees to include in their field guide. Give them 10 -15 minutes to select them.
- 2) After all students have selected eight, work as a whole class to brainstorm the different characteristics they can find out about their trees (leaves/needles – numbers, size, shape, edges, stems, venation; bark – color, texture, thickness; buds – color, shape, number, and arrangement; branch, leaf and bud patterns – opposite, alternate, and whorled; height/size; shape/silhouette; plant, animal and insect associations; seeds, cones, nuts, and fruit; fragrance and sound in the wind).

- 3) Give each student eight copies of the tree fact pages and give them time to complete them for each of their chosen trees.
- 4) Let students select from a variety of page styles for their field guide (leaf or tree shape, color coded, etc.). Have students transfer their information from the tree fact pages to their field guide pages. Remind students that all of their work should be edited for spelling and punctuation. Have students include several blank pages that they could fill in after the field trip.

Explanation

- 1) As a class, list all of the trees that students selected. Now list all of the different ways that the trees could be grouped – coniferous, deciduous, tall, short, long lived, short lived, hardwood, softwood, broad-leaved, needle, etc.
- 2) Tell students to determine all of the different ways that the trees they selected could be grouped. Have them select categories to arrange their trees according to their taxonomy in their field guide.

Elaboration

- 1) Take a field trip with a tribal forestry employee. Students should take their science journals to take field notes.
- 2) Have students use their field notes to add to their field guide when they return to class. Allow them to create a cover for their field guide.

Evaluation

Evaluate student on the quality of their field guides and the appropriateness of the taxonomy system they chose to use for their guide.

Resources

[Cherokees of California](#) web site – Provides the traditional Cherokee story, “The Legend of the Cedar Tree”.

www.powersource.com/cocinc/articles/cedar.htm