



Meet A Tree

2nd grade and up

OVERVIEW:

In this short activity students explore the forest using a variety of senses and observe tree diversity. They notice ways in which trees differ and reflect on others' perspectives. This activity requires at least two people to run. The participant can do this with a parent, sibling, or anyone else that is old enough to participate.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to...

- Make observations of plants to compare the diversity of life in a habitat
- Reflect on how other people or animals receive information through their senses and respond in different ways

MATERIALS:

- Blindfold, bandana or some kind of eye covering
- Paper and pencil for reflection
- Optional– crayon and paper for bark rubbing

Begin by finding a spot outside where the ground is mostly flat and clear of tripping hazards. You'll want to choose a spot with at least 4-5 trees a short distance away.

Once you have found your spot, think about the trees that are surrounding you and your partner (or group if you are more than 2 people). Think about how many different types of trees are in this ecosystem. Compare the trees that you see, are they all the same as the other trees nearby? Can you see more than 1 type of tree?

There is a lot of diversity in this area and to explore that idea more, you will spend some time investigating the trees.



With your partner, one of you will be blindfolded while the other person safely and carefully leads them to a nearby tree. Once at the tree, the blindfolded person should take a few moments to observe the tree using senses other than sight.

They can feel the texture and features of the tree such as branches, they can smell the tree, they can even hug the tree and listen! The blindfolded person must use their senses to investigate and remember the tree that was chosen for them.

Once the blindfolded person has observed the tree, the partner that can see should then lead them back to the starting point where they can remove their blindfold. Now, the person that was blindfolded must try to find the tree that they had just investigated. Once they have found their tree or asked for help from their partner, they can switch roles.



Hint: It is more challenging and fun if partners try to confuse each other by taking circuitous paths. You can also try to choose different types and ages of trees.

Discuss with your partner the differences in trees you felt/smelled/observed while doing this activity. It could be while you were blindfolded or while you were leading your partner to and from their tree.

With your partner, take a few minutes to explore this area and try to find 4 different species of tree. Make sure you can back up your claim that they are different species of trees with evidence.

You are welcome to bring paper with you if you want to draw the different trees that you see or write about them. Scientists often take notes of what they observe in nature!

Optional Extension:

You can extend this activity and gather more observations about the trees around you by doing bark rubbings. Simply take a small piece of scratch paper with a blank or mostly blank side, and lay it flat against the tree. Take the long edge of a crayon and rub it against the paper so that you rub onto the paper the texture of the tree. (Hint: it helps to peel the paper wrapping off of the crayon to more easily rub with)

Try to collect rubbings from more than one tree to compare them. What do you notice about the rubbings that you collected? How does the tree bark differ? What makes each rubbing unique?

Lastly, find a quiet spot to sit and reflect on what you observed about the trees and forest. You can write about your answers, or just think about them. If you'd like, you can share your thoughts with your partner after you have had time to reflect.



How did you perceive the forest when you could not see?

What can we observe using our other senses, besides sight?

How did you know what tree was yours?

Did you have a strategy for finding your tree?

Why is having different kinds of trees in the forest important?

Did any of the trees that you observed remind you of a specific time or memory?

Is there anything you wonder about these trees?