

Chipko Tree Hugging

Essential Question(s):

Why should we care about trees?

Why are trees important to Earth?

Background Information:

The Chipko People in India are a Hindu sect for whom protection of trees and wild animals is a religious duty. Sunderlal Bahaguna, a Chipko leader, states, "In one of our religious books it is written that a tree is like ten children because it gives ten valuable things: oxygen, water, energy, food, clothes, timber, herbs, fodder, flowers and shade." Deforestation poses a very serious threat to the Chipko people. Villagers understand the importance of the trees to their livelihood; women hug them, clinging to them to prevent them from being cut down. This action was known as the Chipko Movement.

Deforestation still happens today. The high demand for timber products as well as the encroachment of development into forested areas has reduced the number of intact forests in the country and in the world. This, combined with the burning of fossil fuels, has increased the amount of air pollution in many areas. Today, more than ever, it is important to understand the importance of living trees.

Getting Ready:

Check the area for poison ivy, fire ants and other hazards.

Procedure:

1. Using the information above, discuss the Chipko Movement with learners. (Optional: read the story [The People who Hugged the Trees.](#))

2. State, *"There are many ways to know trees. In this activity we will gain a sense of the reverence that the Chipko people hold for trees."*



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3. Ask learners to choose a partner.

4. Explain, *"Blindfold your partner and guide him or her to a tree. The safety of your partner is in your hands, so guide them slowly and carefully. If there is a log or other object in his or her path, warn them about it. When you arrive at your selected tree, let your partner spend some time getting to know their tree by hugging it as the Chipko people do."*

Give learners further instructions, *"Get to know your tree anyway you can. How big around is it? Does it have any branches? What does its bark feel like? What does it smell like? When you feel like you know*

Location: forest or school arboretum with access to trees. Make sure that area is free from fire ants or other harmful insects or thorny vines and poison ivy.

Objectives: *Learners will*

- 1) describe the 'Chipko Movement' of India.
- 2) express concern about deforestation of Earth's forest,
- 3) state two ways they can help Earth's forests.

Skills: communication, listening, analysis, empathy

Supplies:

- one blindfold for every two learners
- optional: [The People Who Hugged the Trees](#), adapted by Deborah Lee Rose, Roberts Rhinehart Inc. Publishers. 1990.

Subjects: language arts, science

Time: 15 minutes

your tree, tell your partner, and they will safely guide you back to your starting position."
When the learners return, tell them to take off their blindfolds and try to point out their trees.

Discussion/Assessment:

How did you find your tree?

What clues did you use to find your tree?

What did your tree feel like?

Did you learn anything unusual about your tree?

Why do Chipko women say that a tree is like having ten sons?

Are the ten sons related to the service departments? How?

Why do the Chipko women hug their trees?

Do you think it is important for them to do this? Why?

Are trees really important to us? Why?

Should we care for our trees the way the Chipko people do?

What is deforestation?

How can we help our local trees?