

Let's Make a Nature Journal

Essential Question(s):

How can you use your journal to study nature?

At a Glance:

Learners discover the wonders of nature journaling by making their own journal and then recording their first entry during an outdoor experience.

Background Information:

The recording of natural phenomena dates back to drawings on cave walls and paintings on animal hides. These are examples of the first nature “journals”. People would record explorations, successful hunts, and specific happenings of each season. Explorers and naturalists kept logs of their journeys and discoveries through nature journals. Drawings and writings were used to describe new species of plants and animals, as well as distribution and behaviors.

Journals can be as simple as a spiral bound notebook or as elaborate as an embossed leather journal. A fun way to start a journal is to create it yourself! There are many ways to decorate a journal using cardstock as the front and back cover. A simple drawing, a quote, or pressed leaves are wonderful ways to get started.

PART 1: Let's Make a Nature Journal

Procedure:

1. Cut two pieces of cardstock to desired size (8 ½ x 11 will be compatible with various GEN journaling activity worksheets).
2. Have learners decorate the front and back covers of their journal using colored pencils, crayons, markers, pressed leaves and flowers, nature quotes, magazine collage, etc. (Make sure to write their name on journal).
3. If possible, laminate covers to reduce wear when using outside.
4. Insert blank journal pages or other GEN journal activities (or other journal ideas you may come up with).
5. Punch holes using a 3-hole punch and fasten using metal clasp rings or yarn.

Extension:

- ◆ Use pressed leaves and/or flowers to decorate the cover of your journal. Make a plant press out of 6+ pieces of cardboard (cut up boxes work well). Place leaves or flowers in between sheets of paper that are between the pieces of cardboard. Bind cardboard press with large rubber bands and let leaves/flowers dry overnight. Have learners use a field guide to identify and label plants.

Location: Classroom

Objectives: *Learners will*

- 1) make a nature journal
- 2) communicate facts and feeling by writing in a journal.

Skills: reflection, creative and technical writing, questioning, expression, perception

Supplies:

- 2 sheets of white, tan, or natural colored Cardstock
- paper (typing)
- hole punch
- 3 metal clasp rings or yarn
- colored pencils, markers, crayons
- optional: dried plants, magazines, glue, nature quotes.
- laminant (optional)
- pencil

Subjects: science, language arts, art.

Time: 30 minutes to 1 hour

- ◆ Have learners research different nature poems or quotes. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and John Burroughs are well-known nature writers. Use these on the cover or as catalyst for a journal entry. Have learners reflect on a poem or quote.
- ◆ A more technical nature journal can include specific information about each journal entry as follows.
 - site name/location
 - date
 - time of day
 - temperature
 - weather conditions: for example: is it cloudy, sunny, windy, raining?
 - wind conditions
 - soil conditions: for example, is it moist or dry?

Discussion/Assessment:

1. How many journals have been used before there were libraries and computers?
2. What are some benefits of journaling?

PART 2: Let's Start Journaling!

Below is a great first journaling activity.

Procedure:

1. Find a spot outside where you will feel comfortable. Don't forget to take your journal and a pencil with you.
2. When you find your spot, have a seat.
3. Open your journal and write down the time and date at the top left hand corner. You may also want to record your location and the weather conditions.
4. Now, close your eyes. What do you hear? Write all the sounds you heard in your journal.
5. Next, write down the scents you smell. Don't forget, you can use drawings and diagrams if you like.
6. Then, take a good look around you. What do you see?