

## **Let's Begin a Nature Journal** Pre-Trip Activity

**Program at Nature Station:** Nature Journaling

**Grade Level:** 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

**Program Length:**

Prep Time: 20 minutes (to make sample journal)

Activity Time: 1 hour

**Group size:** 5-30 students

**Setting:** Classroom (and outside, if the teacher so desires)

**Vocabulary:**

nature journal – a personal notebook for recording your own observations, thoughts, and impressions of nature with writing and drawing

observation – something you notice with your senses

descriptive words – words that tell the qualities that characterize an object

reflections – thoughts that you make about an experience after you have had time to process it and consider what it means

**Materials:**

- paper (or notebooks with blank covers that students can decorate)
- pencils and crayons
- stapler or hole punch and yarn or other fastener
- sample journal to show students

**Background Information:**

When your class comes to the Nature Station, our staff will lead your students through a series of writing and drawing activities that help them learn about the natural world through their own direct experiences. By making and beginning their own nature journals before the field trip, your students will be ready to jump right into the program activities and continue their journaling after the field trip.

Keeping a nature journal enables students to learn about the natural world around them in a personal way. By recording their observations, creative ideas, thoughts, and feelings in writing and art, students will be able to explore their awareness of the natural world. With practice, nature journaling helps students develop their skills of observation, description, and reflection. It also gives them a way to express their creativity.

## Procedure:

1. Lead students in a discussion about what journaling is:
  - a. What is a journal? Do any of the students keep a journal?
  - b. What are some reasons people might want to keep a journal?
  - c. What do they think a *nature* journal is? What would you write or draw in a nature journal?
  - d. Why would someone keep a journal about nature?
2. Show a sample journal and some example pages – drawings, writing, etc.
3. Tell students that they are going to begin their own nature journals. Share some ideas about keeping a journal:
  - a. You can be yourself in your journal.
  - b. It doesn't matter if you don't think you are a good artist – you don't have to win an art contest for your journal.
  - c. We'll use all of our senses (except taste)
  - d. You can share some parts of your journal with others.
  - e. Try to be specific in your journal when you make observations and descriptions.
4. Pass out paper (or notebooks) and crayons. Let students design a cover for their journal.
5. If you want, you can go outside for them to make their first journal entry.
6. Lead students through the basic information that they should record whenever they make a new journal entry:
  - a. Date
  - b. Place
  - c. Time of day
  - d. Weather conditions
  - e. Any other important information – who they are with, special location or activity, their mood, etc.
7. Lead students through their first journal activity
  - a. Have students write the words “I see” at the top of a page. Have them take 1 minute and list everything they see.
  - b. Have students write the words “I hear” at the top of a page. Have them take 1 minute and list everything they hear.
  - c. Challenge students to do some creative thinking. Have them imagine that they are an animal of their choice. How would they complete the following sentences:
    - “Through a \_\_\_\_\_’s eyes, I would see . . . “
    - “With a \_\_\_\_\_’s ears, I would hear . . . “
8. Tell students that they will be bringing their journals on their field trip.

**Assessment or Evaluation:** Ask for volunteers to share some of their entries.