



EVERGREEN

Teacher's Corner Lesson Plans

*Helping Teachers and Students Make the Most of
their Outdoor Classroom*

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A Tree's Pleas*†

Melanie Bergelt

Grade level: 4

Provincial curriculum links: Ontario

Subject: Science and Technology, Language

Keywords: stewardship, letter-writing

Description

Students take on the role of their adopted school ground tree or shrub and write a letter to the humans (students) that take it for granted. This exercise allows students to creatively communicate what they have learned through their research and observation, with a particular focus on tree stewardship. This is a literacy activity that can be completed as part of the "Adopt-A-Tree" project.

Curriculum Framework

Topic: Life Systems, Language

Strand: Habitats and Communities, Writing

Specific Lesson Goals:

- Investigate the dependency of plants and animals on their habitat and the interrelationships of the plants and animals living in a specific habitat
- Identify, through observation, various factors that affect plants and animals in a specific habitat
- Describe ways in which humans can affect the natural world

* This exercise is adapted from *Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom*, Evergreen/TDSB Summer Institute, 2007, 82 pages.

† Submitted by: Melanie Bergelt

- Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience
- Establish a personal voice in their writing, with a focus on using words and stylistic elements that convey a specific mood

Preparation

Preparation time:

- 15 minutes

Length of lesson:

- 40 minutes

Resources required:

- chart paper
- lined paper
- pencils
- erasers
- story book
- Adopt-A-Tree journals

Procedure

1. Begin by reading a story with a tree as the central character, such as "The Great Kapok Tree", "The Giving Tree" or some other favourite.
2. Introduce the purpose and audience for the letter. Emphasize that students are to write creatively, but also use the facts that they have uncovered about their tree/shrub. On chart paper, students then brainstorm some ideas about their tree to include in their letter (physical description, age, habitat description, needs, role, school ground memories, etc.)
3. On a separate piece of paper, review parts of a letter (heading, greeting, body, closing, signature). Also provide an example of a creative way to begin the body of the letter to (i.e.: My name is Maple and I have stood tall, green and proud in a busy corner of the school ground for more than 20 years...)
4. Students then complete a pre-writing activity (i.e.: web diagram) to plan their writing. They should also consult their Adopt-A-Tree journals for facts and observations about the tree and its habitat.

Discussion and Questions

Discuss the mood of the letter – is the tree happy, well-looked after or is this a plea for help and stewardship?

Student Assessment and Evaluation

A checklist can be used to ensure that students have incorporated the parts of a letter. The writing process can also be evaluated (pre-writing, first draft, editing and final draft). This activity is in turn an evaluation tool for their "Adopt-A-Tree" journals. A more detailed and creative letter is evidence of careful observations and thorough research.

Enrichment and Extension Activities

- After studying their tree or shrub and writing from its point of view, students will be more motivated to participate in tree stewardship activities (see "Mulch is magic: spread it" and Evergreen's "Tree Care Guide").
- After showcasing the letters on a bulletin board, they can be compiled into a book.

Educator Notes

Complete this activity in early spring when students have observed their tree/shrub throughout the school year.

References/Resources

Tree Care Guide, www.evergreen.ca

Mulch is magic: spread it! EcoSchools, 2006.