



# Teacher's Corner Lesson Plans

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

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## Don't Leaf Out Without Me!<sup>\*†</sup>

Journey North

**Grade level:** Grade 3 and 4.

**Provincial curriculum links:** Ontario.

**Subject:** Science and Technology - Life Systems, English Language - Oral and Written Communication.

**Keywords:** Leaf.

### Description

Students observe a chosen tree throughout the spring, watching for signs of “leaf-out” - the time when new leaves reach the size of a quarter. Reports are sent to “Journey North” a web-site for students which tracks migration patterns and the arrival of spring in North America.

### Curriculum Framework

Topic: Growth and Changes in Plants

Strand: Life Systems 3s5 3s7 4s4

Specific Lesson Goals:

- Students will observe a select tree in their neighbourhood, gathering and recording data on a regular basis throughout the early spring.

Topic: Language

Strand: Oral and Visual Communication 3e55 3e27 4e2 4e67

Specific Lesson Goals:

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<sup>\*</sup>This exercise is adapted from Journey North Web Site. <http://www.learner.org/jnorth>

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- Students will contact Journey North and provide updates of their observations, keeping track of the arrival of spring in North America on maps which are available through the Journey North Web site.
- Students will share their work with the school and community.

## Preparation

**Preparation time:** 1 hour to visit the Journey North web site and become familiarized with the material which can be found there.

**Length of lesson:** 40 minutes and regular observations during the spring.

**Resources required:**

- maple tree or trembling aspen (poplar) tree near the school that students can visit on a regular basis
- paper
- pencils
- digital camera
- internet connection to Journey North

## Procedure

1. Visit the Journey North website (<http://www.learner.org/jnorth>) and find the Leaf-Out page. The website introduces students to a global study of seasonal change and migration patterns. Each spring, one of the signs of spring that has been identified is the leafing out of several tree species. In Ontario, students can adopt either a sugar maple tree or a trembling aspen (poplar) tree.
2. Students visit their adopted tree on a regular basis. Students may wish to measure their tree - circumference, height, bark rubbing, etc.
3. Students watch for signs that the new leaves are beginning to open. When the leaves reach the size of a quarter, students send a message to Journey North indicating their tree has leafed out. This sign of spring will be recorded on the official Journey North map, which is updated on a regular basis.
4. Students make a map of North America and follow the arrival of spring using the data provided by Journey North.

5. Students prepare a media release for the local newspaper when their tree has leafed out, and invite the media to attend for an “official” spring photo shoot.

## Discussion and Questions

- What are some local factors that might affect the leafing out of your tree? (i.e. close to a building; growing on a hill; winter snow and temperature)
- What other signs of spring can you find to report upon to Journey North?

## Student Evaluation

With the students, develop a rating scale for student participation. Use the rating scale as a self-evaluation tool.

## Enrichment and Extension Activities

- Journey North schools throughout North America track several signs of spring. Choose one or more of the following and report to Journey North - ice out on your local lake, river, or pond; first frog singing; return of red-winged blackbirds; red emperor tulips blooming; maple syrup run. Check out the web site and send in your data.

## Connections to the Outdoor Environment

- Searching for signs of spring can only be done outside - being outside helps us become more in tune with our surroundings. Raising our awareness of seasonal changes helps us become more connected with those changes and more intent in keeping our environment healthy.

## Educator Notes

There are many activity adventures available on the Journey North website, which will interest students from Kindergarten to OAC. All adventures are geared to outdoor explorations.