



# Explore Your Watershed with Nature Journals

## Summary

To be used after the “Create your own watershed” activity, this activity asks students to stop and notice the world around them, make observations and record their thoughts in a journal.

## Materials

Printed nature journals (provided as part of this lesson plan). Print the cover on heavy paper or card stock for more durability. Print interior pages double sided, fold all pages in half and staple to make a book for each student. If you plan on keeping a journal for an entire school year, it’s probably best to have students dedicate a notebook for that sole purpose; a one subject spiral or composition book will work fine.

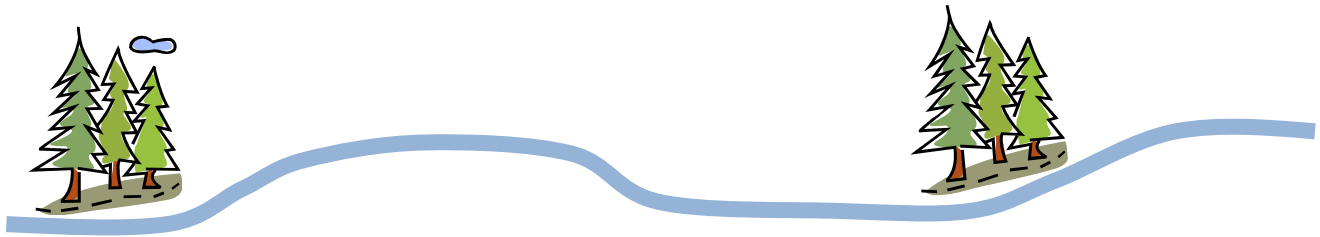
## Introductory Activities

1. Brainstorm what you might find in a watershed. Remember that every bit of land on the Earth is in a watershed. You might find things like birds, dogs, elephants, stores, homes, stores and fire stations.
2. Discuss observations and inferences.
3. Discuss adjectives. These words are important in describing what we see in nature. Do you see a “large bug” or a “lime green bug with six legs and two antennas that is approximately the size of a dime”?
4. What is a nature journal? It is a collection of thoughts and observations about the world around us. Journals from early explorers and naturalists provide some of the best information about our natural heritage. While it is important to record observations, it is also appropriate to include your reactions, thoughts and feels about what you see around you. Drawings, diagrams, leaf rubbings, poems and reflections are all important part of the journaling process.

Additional for older students – Read the excerpt from “The Sand County Almanac” included below.

## Terms to know

Adjective, observation, inference



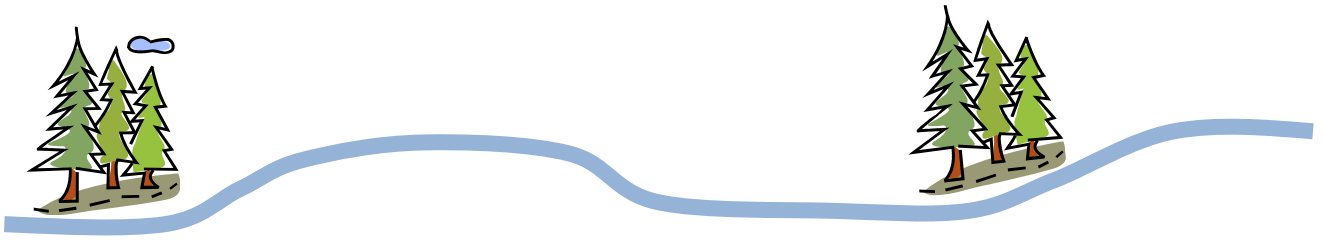
## Activities

The great thing about nature journals they are highly portable and easy to use anywhere. The first exercise listed below is conducted in the classroom, to get students used to the idea of natural journaling in a safe environment. After that, the skies are the limit but below are some easy ways to include nature journaling in your activities throughout the school year.

1. Start with a classroom observation of nature. Bring in flowers, tree branches, soil, water, bones, shells and other natural items. Place them on tables around the room and have students write a journal entry using their observation skills. An indoor trial run is especially helpful with younger students or students who may be easily distracted in an outdoor setting. See “Hints for Simulated Field Trips” below from *Project WILD Aquatic*.
2. Take it outside. Take the class to an outdoor setting on school property, maybe the play ground, the baseball field, or a grassy side yard, any “green” area will do. Spend 20 to 30 minutes observing the natural world and journaling. Note how many different natural things you find just in the yard. Bugs, puddles, birds, weeds, etc.
3. Take the class on a nature journaling field trip. Visit a local Park, nature center or preserve. Have students spend 30 minutes observing nature and journaling.
4. Revisit sites. Go to the same location at different times of day or during different seasons. Have students review their journal entries from previous visits and note changes in the area. Have the leaves changed colors or fallen from trees? Are different birds present? Can they find the same type of insect they drew last time?
5. Nature journals can be used in conjunction with other field trips. Planning a school trip to the zoo? Take five minutes at the lion enclosure to observe the animals and write a journal entry. Planning a trip to the park? Take 10 minutes before you leave to have a quiet journaling time and wind down before the bus trip home.

## Wrap-up Questions – these can be done as a class or in small groups

1. Would anyone like to read a part of their journal entry aloud or share a drawing or diagram with the group?
2. What topic did you journal about? Did everyone choose similar topics or is there a variety? Do you think the topics covered adequately represent the natural area you were observing?
3. If you are revisiting a site, discuss the differences each student noticed between visits. Predict what you might see on a future visit to the site.



# **My Nature Journal**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**

**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**

Today's Date:

Where are you?

What is the weather like?

What are your observations?

(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)



**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**

**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**

**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**

**Today's Date:**

**Where are you?**

**What is the weather like?**

**What are your observations?**

**(use words or pictures to describe  
what you see, smell, hear, and feel)**