

Growing Works of Art Activity Guide

Objectives

1. Students identify at least one tree near their home, school, or in their community.
2. Students write a short story about how trees impact our health and/or our communities.
3. Students create an original work of art depicting their chosen tree.

Skills Used

Observing, comparing, researching, describing, writing, discussing, creating, evaluating

Materials

Paper, pencils, crayons, paint, markers, research material

Technology Connections

Internet resources, digital cameras, publishing software.

Background

Arbor Day was founded in 1872 by J. Sterling Morton as a day for Nebraska residents to plant, nurture and appreciate trees. It is a day to celebrate the difference trees make in our lives. George Perkins Marsh (1801 – 1882) of Woodstock can be credited with an early Arbor Day movement in Vermont. His publication "Man and Nature" emerged because of the widespread deforestation and environmental degradation he witnessed while ambassador to Italy. This prompted both a state and national response in environmental care, including tree planting initiatives in both rural and urban environments. Today, Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states. In Vermont, we celebrate it on the first Friday in May.

Vermont is home to more than 100 species of trees. Each species requires a unique combination of sun, soil and water to grow. Therefore, we find different kinds of trees growing in a wide variety of locations in our Green Mountain State. Some trees are associated with wet conditions, others with dry; some are found on our mountaintops and others in our downtowns. The harsher the environment, the fewer species of trees we find growing there. Each tree species is different, and has distinguishing features and growing requirements that set it apart from other trees.

We all have tree stories, with so many different species of trees here in Vermont, and each providing us many benefits from shade to wood products. Trees are important to our communities and help provide a sense of place. Trees also provide us places to rest and relax under the shade, and habitat for wildlife.

This year, the Growing Works of Art contest is celebrating with a theme "**Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives.**" Students will write a short story (one to three paragraphs) capturing how trees impact our health or our communities and create art illustrating their chosen tree. Eight students (one per grade) will have their artwork showcased online.

Some examples of personal tree stories:

- Tree Whisperers collection of tree stories: <https://treewhispers.com/>
- Some Arbor Day tree stories by people who received sapling trees in first grade:
https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_schools_students_teachers/2-1.aspx
https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_schools_students_teachers/sad-little-sapling-becomes-wel.aspx
https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_schools_students_teachers/small-sapling-huge-potential.aspx

Submission Guidelines

- **Entries are due by March 12, 2021.**
- Students currently enrolled in grades 1-8 in Vermont are eligible to enter. One prize will be awarded per grade.
- Only one entry per student.
- Artwork must be original, no larger than 11 x 17 inches and created in the following mediums: pen, pencil, crayon, pastels, paint, cloth, collage, photography, or computer art.
- Entry must be titled with the type of tree (tree species) and signed in the lower right-hand corner by the student.
- On the reverse side of the artwork or on an attached sheet of paper, students will provide a written short story (one to three paragraphs in length) sharing the fond memory they have of from their chosen tree.
- Attach completed entry form with the student's entry.
- Teachers and club or organization leaders may submit entries in group if each individual submission has completed entry form attached to the reverse side of each piece of artwork.
- **Entries will become property of the Vermont Division of Forestry and as such not be returned.**

Doing the Activity

1) Student Research

Ask students what they like about trees. Have them share stories about their favorite trees and what makes them special. Explain that they will be doing research to create a work of "tree art" about a tree near their home, in their schoolyard, in the community. After a general discussion about trees, have students focus on a specific tree with a special memory for them, a tree that helped them grow. Help students identify the type of tree they chose, using tools from the "Additional Resources" section.

2) Student Writing

After the discussion about what they enjoy about trees, help students focus by asking them what they appreciate most about the tree they chose. Talk about the specific stories they want to share about their chosen tree. Read some tree stories together (see the "Additional Resources" section for ideas), and discuss the elements of each story. Some things to discuss:

- What is the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?
- Who are the characters?
- What do you like about them?
- What is the setting?
- Is there a conflict? If so, how does it get resolved?
- What do you think about the ending? Is there a connection, either in words or pictures, between the ending and the beginning of the story?

Some story ideas could come from animals that students have seen in trees, trees they enjoy climbing, or the shade they enjoy from trees. Maybe they enjoy jumping in leaves, picnicking in

shade, building tree forts, collecting acorns, spinning maple seeds, or making maple syrup from their favorite trees. Or perhaps they planted a special tree near their home.

You can use the bulleted structures below to help your younger students craft their writing response. Younger students need to write at least four narrative sentences (one paragraph) describing a story about their chosen tree. Older students need to write at least one paragraph, and no more than three paragraphs. The “Additional Resources” section is full of great information, but the **writing portion should be in the students’ own words**. Remember, **we want to celebrate trees by sharing your tree story!**

Story writing with younger students:

Stories should include:

- A topic sentence.
- Three details about why it is important to you.
- A concluding sentence.

For example: This is a picture of the maple tree in my backyard. It is tall and wide. (Detail 1). My brother and I play in its shade. (Detail 2). There is a swing in it that we like to play on. (Detail 3). This tree is special to us and I hope it is alive for a very long time (Concluding Sentence).

Story writing with older students:

- Have students list tree memories, and story ideas in a notebook or on a sheet of paper.
- Revisit this list later, and have students consider which memory is most vivid and interesting.
- As a warm-up, have students discuss their memory story with a partner.
- Independently, have students record as many details as possible about their tree memory, including: the event, people present, the smells, and the sounds of the vivid memory.
- Have students begin drafting their memory story, remembering the components that make stories exciting: narrative voice, conflict, characters, and setting.

3) Student Art

Students need to create their tree artwork in either pen, pencil, crayon, pastels, paint, cloth, collage, photography, or computer art. Instruct students to illustrate the characteristics of the chosen tree in a way to help people understand why the tree is so special. The artwork must be titled with the name of the tree species (tree type) and signed by the artist in the lower right-hand corner.

Enrichment

Younger students can create journals or portfolios with additional information about the chosen tree and their many facts and benefits. Students could “adopt” these trees, visiting them on multiple occasions to measure them and draw them in different weather and different seasons. Older students can create brochures or posters with information about their trees. These could be compiled into a book or a larger brochure to create an interpretive “tree walk” around the schoolyard or community.

Once the posters are printed, students can use the poster to discuss the many stories from the trees we all love.

Assessment Opportunities

- Artwork contains both the visual and printed information about trees and stories about them.
- Students can compare their written descriptions.
- Student artwork accurately captures the characteristics of the chosen tree.

Additional Resources

Below are some helpful reference and resource books for reading connections.

Website Resources

Vermont Arbor Day & VT Urban & Community Forestry Program: www.vtcommunityforestry.org

Nature Explore: www.natureexplore.org

Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org

Arbor Day in the Classroom: www.arborday.org/arborday/activity-for-the-classroom.cfm

Project Learning Tree: www.vermontplt.org

Vibrant Cities Lab: www.vibrantcitieslab.com

Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives: www.southernforests.org/urban/healthy-trees-healthy-lives

Field Guides

Little, Ebert L. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
National Arbor Day Foundation. *What Tree is That?* 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, Nebraska.
The Peterson Field Guide Series. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Literature

Anosky, Jim. *Crinkleroot's Guide to Knowing the Trees*. Simon & Schuster, 1992. An illustrated introduction to trees and woodlands with details on how to identify bark and leaves of trees. Grades 2-7.

Baylor, Byrd. *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. Atheneum, 1994. A girl discovers that her impoverished family is rich in things that matter in life, especially being outdoors and experiencing nature. Grades K-4.

Geisel, Theodore Seuss (Dr. Seuss). *The Lorax*. Random House, 1971. In this classic story, the Once-ler describes how his greedy actions destroyed a beautiful and thriving environment. Grades PreK-6.

Hutchins, Pat. *Good Night Owl! Aladdin*, 1990. Owl couldn't sleep—not with all the noises the other animals were making. Grades PreK-1.

Iverson, Diane. *My Favorite Tree: Terrific Trees of North America*. Dawn Publications, 1999.

This book celebrates the joy found in exploring your favorite tree. Separate text for older children provide greater detail about tree characteristics and uses. Grades pre-K - 7.

Kirkland, Jane. *Take a Tree Walk*. Stillwater Publishing, 2002. An interactive self-guided search for the wonder of trees. Grades 3-7.

Mora, Pat. *Pablo's Tree*. Simon and Schuster, 1994. Each year on his birthday, a young Mexican American boy looks forward to seeing how his grandfather has decorated the tree he planted on the day the boy was adopted. Grades PreK-3.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, 1989. A Sand County Almanac combines some of the finest nature writing since Thoreau with an outspoken and highly ethical regard for America's relationship for the land. Grades 6+.

National Wildlife Federation. *Trees are Terrific*. McGraw-Hill Companies, 1998. This book teaches children about a variety of tree species, parts of trees and how to celebrate trees. Grades K-4.
Worth, Bonnie. *I Can Name 50 Trees Today!: All About Trees*. Random House Publishing Group. 2006. While admiring some of the world's most incredible trees, beginning readers will learn how to identify different species of trees. Grades K-3.

Oppenheim, Joanne. *Have You Seen Trees?* William R. Scott Publishers, 1967. A poem that celebrates trees in all their varied glory. Grades PreK-3.

Ryder, Joanne. *Hello Tree!* Lodestar Publishers., 1991. Describes some of the unique characteristics of trees. Grades PreK-3.

Vermont Vital Standards & Grade Expectations Reached

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Continuity and Change: 4.5a, 4.5b

Writing: 1.5, 1.6a-aa, 1.8a, f, g, h, i, j, k, 1.16, 1.18, 1.19a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, 1.21

Natural Resources and Agriculture: 7.16, 17.17a, b, c

Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Literature Texts Grades 1-8: L.1, L.4, L.7

Informational Texts Grades 1-8: I.1, I.4, I.7

Anchor Standards for Writing Grades 1-8: W.2, W.4, W.7, W.8, W.9

Next Generation Science Standards Addressed

Crosscutting Concepts:

Patterns

Stability and Change

Science and Engineering Practices:

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Obtaining, Evaluating and Communicating Information

Program Sponsors



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