

Wood Wide Web

Outdoor Learning Plan

Session Leader:		No. of children: 15-30		Age range: All Primary	
Location: E.g. School Grounds, Park, Woodland, Beach		Resources: Mud Trees Markers of some sort – wool / rope/ stones / cones		Success criteria: Everyone will create a muddy face Everyone will take part in the story of the wildwood	
Subject: Mud & Roots		Learning Objective (Rationale): Develop understanding of the rainforest, focussing on the trees and considering how living creatures are connected and impact upon each other.		Keywords: rainforest layers, deforestation, communication	
Time: 90 mins at least					
5 mins	Circle	Boundaries & safety briefing.			
5 mins		Warm up game		Rainforest layers -Leader calls out the descriptions below one by one of the 4 layers of the rainforest and the children get into positions.	

Size Of Wales

All Primary



			<p>1 - Forest Floor - get low to the ground, wave your wimpy branches (because they don't get much light), show me your insect tentacles or how the worms are moving, or become a forest floor fungi.</p> <p>2: - Understory - all stretch up an arm to try to reach through the leaves above up to the sky. Twist around like lianas and snakes circling the slender trunks of fast growing trees.</p> <p>3: - Canopy - spread out your branches (arms) and feel the sunlight and rain on your leaves, overlap with other trees. This is the crowded canopy where most of the animals live and come to find food and shelter.</p> <p>4: - Emergent - start low crouched to the ground then jump up as high as you can shouting 'emergent' - these are the forest giants, fast growing and ancient trees, towering over the canopy up to 100m tall. Instead of jumping, everyone could climb onto something a log, bench, tree etc to get as high as possible or in pairs or groups - lift one person above all the rest.</p>
10 mins	Circle	Discuss Learning Objective and pool knowledge	Rainforest layers - When you are 'being' the canopy, I asked you to spread out your branches to overlap with other trees. Is there any other part of the trees which might overlap?

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			Roots – we’re going to get to the root of things today.
10 mins	Pairs / Threes	Activity to develop / consolidate knowledge, e.g. finding hidden items, collecting or spotting something in area	Using markers of some kind – wool, cones, stones, whatever works for your group – choose a tree and place a marker of how far you think the roots stretch out from the tree underground.
5 mins	Circle	Share findings briefly Introduce creative activity	Do any of the areas overlap? Yes. Activity – stick grab – children in 2 long lines holding hands – with the end of the line about 1-2 metres from a tree. All face the tree apart from the very end children nearest you, who face you. You give a silent signal – could be a nod or drop your hand down. The end children have to pass the message down the line by squeezing the hand of the next child. Each child squeezes the next hand and the last children in the line reach out or leap out to touch the nearest tree. The idea is to see how the message can be passed non-verbally and try to understand how trees might pass messages through their roots. You can repeat this game a few times to see if they can get faster at communicating or if one line is quicker than the other after a few tries. The way trees communicate non-verbally is via fungal networks called ‘mycorrhizal networks’.



			<p>“Some are calling it the ‘wood-wide web,’” says Peter Wohlleben, who wrote ‘The Hidden Life of Trees’ “All the trees here, and in every forest that is not too damaged, are connected to each other through underground fungal networks. Trees share water and nutrients through the networks, and also use them to communicate. They send distress signals about drought and disease, for example, or insect attacks, and other trees alter their behaviour when they receive these messages. Alarm and distress appear to be the main topics of tree conversation, but what do trees say when there is no danger and they feel content? This I would love to know.”</p> <p>If you have time children could see if they can think of other non-verbal ways of communicating and discuss what would they be communicating to each other?</p>
20 mins	Groups	Creative activity	<p>At this point – you can simply ask the question – what would trees say if they could talk to us? Or you can role play this – becoming the voice of one of the trees and tell its story first person. e.g. ‘You call me Oak or Derw, but I call myself Quercus. I’ve been standing here on this spot for 200 years and I’ve watched many people and animals come and go. Once I was just a tiny acorn way up in</p>



		<p>the sky, until I was suddenly ripped away by a huge furry monster (I know now it was a tiny squirrel... but at the time.. it was scary), it buried me in a dark place and forgot about me and I waited there for a long time. One day, my roots began to grow and they stretched out through the soil searching for nutrients and information. My roots touched other roots and found the way to hold on to the earth and told me which way to go. I started to feel secure, so I pushed a shoot up and up and through the soil and into the light... and I started to grow. I'm over 15 metres tall now, but please don't chop me down to find out if that's true, nor to count my rings..." Etc. You can go on telling the story of the tree, including facts and details relevant to the group and to the projects.</p> <p>Explain that the roots go through the soil - and while we can't hear the trees talking, perhaps we could make them some faces with mouths... and help them to tell their stories. Everyone makes a muddy face now - this can be super quick if you already have mud, or can be an adventure to find the mud or the water - you could bring in ideas about drought and how this affects trees too as well as people. Or you can bring your own water, use a stick to scrape up some earth and mix your own mud.</p> <p>Muddy faces are made by splatting</p>
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			mud onto a tree trunk and adding bits and pieces for a face.
15 mins	As 1 or 2 groups	Feedback from Creative activity - presentation by children	Look round at the different muddy faces and give children the chance to tell the story of what their tree might be saying.
10 mins	As 1 group	Game - to suit the mood / group	Stuck in the mud game seems appropriate.(See the Tree planting activity for explanation).
10 mins	Circle	Review learning, reflect on experience	Complete this sentence round the circle 'If I were a tree, I would say...' you could give some examples if they need it e.g. 'don't chop me down just to count my rings', 'careful squirrel, that tickles' etc.