

We chose 4 Nature Journal topics:

1. ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

2. PLANTS

3. PLACE & MAPMAKING

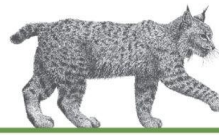
4. CYCLES

We offer these prompt suggestions for each topic through a spring lens.

I. ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS:

- Observe _____ and record what you notice through words, pictures, and numbers — but use more of whichever you are most comfortable with.
- Draw, describe, and label your drawing of the animal you are watching.
- Observe the features and behaviors of an animal near you. List, draw, and ask a question about what you think this animal is doing.
- How might the structure you noticed on the animal help it survive chilly spring mornings?
- Going further, time how long it does a behavior.
- Estimate the size of the animal.
- Draw what you think the animal might look like inside.
- Use crayons or colored pencils to make smudges of the colors of the day or the animal you are observing on the spring day.
- Describe the weather right now. Wind? Wind speed? Temperature in degrees? Temperature related to how to dress for comfort? Amount of clouds? Description of clouds?
- How might the animal activity be affected by today's weather?

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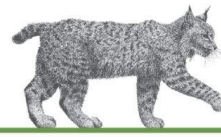


2. PLANTS:

- Observe _____ and record what you notice through words, pictures, and numbers — but use more of whichever you are most comfortable with.
- Use crayons or colored pencils to show the colors you see on this plant.
- Explore your plant through touch, sound, smell and sight. Describe and draw the textures you notice. What does the texture remind you of?
- Focus on one part of this plant. Draw, describe, and wonder. How might the shape and texture of this plant part help it survive? Why do you think it is like that?
- Find 2 leaf buds to look at. Compare them. How are they alike and different?
- Use a hand lens to explore a bud close up. Record your discoveries on your journal page.
- How might the structure you noticed on the _____ plant help it survive?
- Draw and describe a bud. Trade your journal page with someone and see if they can find your bud based on the information on your journal page.
- Look at a growing twig close up. Find 3 things to count on your twig. Label and record what you count.
- Describe the weather right now. Wind? Wind speed? Temperature in degrees? Temperature related to how to dress for comfort? Amount of clouds? Description of clouds?
- How might the plant you are observing be affected by today's weather?

3. PLACE & MAPMAKING:

- Observe the (stream-forest edge-sidewalk crack-bridge-garden) and record what you notice through words, pictures and numbers — but use more of whichever you are most comfortable with.
- Use a 3-foot piece of yarn to make a circle at your Sit Spot. Look carefully at everything inside that circle. Are any plants bright green and growing? Are there any insects waking up from hibernation? Make a map of what you see inside your circle.
- Going further, count what there is the most of? Least of?
- Imagine you are as tall as your thumb. Explore the world of your circle as a little being. It might help to break a stick to be the little being as tall as your thumb. Now explore the world in your circle with a hand lens. What did your little being discover while exploring?
- We will visit (the swamp, this place) through the seasons. Make a map of it from (the trail) and label some landmarks. How might it be different in the summer time?

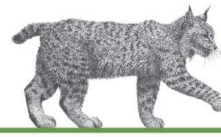


Spring Prompts

- Going further, orient your map to a compass. Label NESW on your map.
- Use crayons or colored pencils to make smudges of the colors of this place today. How many shades of green can you find?
- Look for evidence that winter is over. Draw, describe and use numbers to tell what you see.
- Look for evidence that now it is spring. Draw, describe, and use numbers to tell what you see.
- Make marks on your page to represent the sounds you hear. Circle the ones that are from nature. Which ones make you think of spring?
- Describe the weather right now. Wind description? Wind speed? Wind direction? Temperature in degrees? Temperature related to how to dress for comfort? Amount of clouds? Description of clouds?
- What about today's weather seems like spring weather?
- Canadian writer Margaret Atwood once wrote, *"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."* Take a closer look at some dirt — what do you think it's made of? What do you notice? Does anything surprise you?
- Record what you feel and think today in your Sit Spot.

4. CYCLES:

- Observe _____ and record what you notice through words, pictures and numbers — but use more of whichever you are most comfortable with.
- Use crayons or colored pencils to make smudges showing the colors of the cycle.
- Make a drawing that shows some of the steps of the cycle you are exploring today (dandelion life cycle, a rotting log, a bud, an insect).
- What do you think it looks like inside a rotting log? Draw and label your prediction.
- I notice . . . I wonder . . . This reminds me of . . .
- Describe the weather right now. Wind description? Wind speed? Wind direction? Temperature in degrees? Temperature related to how to dress for comfort? Amount of clouds? Description of clouds? How might the cycle you are observing be affected by today's weather?
- *"I adore the sense of aliveness and vitality that comes with spring. As if I could feel it actually turn on with the vernal equinox, everything feels endlessly full of hope." ~ Mary Oliver*
- Write or draw something in your journal that makes you think of spring.



Debriefing After Solo Journaling

After nature journaling, give students time to turn and talk about your debrief questions with a partner. Then hold a group discussion. Discussion prompt possibilities:

- What did you discover today that you had never noticed before?
- What journaling techniques did you use today?
- Learning new things is challenging. When you learn new journaling techniques, you grow your brain. What was challenging today? How did you handle that?
- Did you try a technique that is different from what you usually do?
- What new ideas can you learn from looking at other people's journals?

Here are some possible themes for creating a nature journal prompt:

- Mapmaking
- Exploring through touch, sound, smell, sight
- Colors of . . . the day, the place, the object of study
- Drawing, describing, and labeling a part of nature to study
- Observing an animal's features and behavior
- Observing changes in a plant over several days, weeks, or months
- Observing something close up with magnification
- Making comparisons
- Responding to a writer's words through writing or drawing
- Exploring a familiar place as if you are as tall as your thumb
- Weather observations: Wind? Wind speed? Temperature in degrees? Temperature related to how to dress for comfort? Amount of clouds? Description of clouds? How might the focus of the day be affected by today's weather?
- Experimenting with an interesting page layout (dividing the page in half for comparing; a close up through a hand lens and a distant view; showing exact size; using arrows or labels to connect words to the drawing . . .)
- This one can be returned to over and over again: I notice . . . I wonder . . . This reminds me of . . .