

ENRICHMENT: River Sense

Adapted from *Project Wet Curriculum Guide*

Objectives and Summary: Students develop a connection to nature through a sensory awareness activity focused on the South Fork of the Snoqualmie River. This lesson could be variously framed to support language arts, science, or visual arts content.

Background: Humans have relied on rivers for food, energy, transportation, drinking water, and irrigation water for thousands of years. For instance, the legendary salmon runs on the Columbia in the pre-colonial era supported our region's prosperous Native American communities, and the easy transport afforded by the Columbia contributed to our own nation's rapid westward expansion and exploration.

Even today, rivers play a vital role in shaping our lives. Washington state is the nation's leader in the production of hydroelectric power; the electricity generated by our rivers and dams provide 2/3 of our state's energy.

In addition to the many practical services rivers provide us, they also can be relied upon to inspire:

River Song

*Slowly down the river, autumn leaves are drifting
The constant current lifts me, to where the sun resides
Rock rimmed, and cold, the waters ever shifting,
without a hesitation, no reason is implied
Autumn leaves are drifting, to where the sun resides*

*Somewhere down the river, thrushes and the swallows,
fly high above rushes, with silky, satin wings
Reeds grow among the shallows, with ducks in hidden hollows
Moss is green, and willows lean, and haloed twilight clings
Ducks in hidden hollows, have silky, satin wings*

*I watch the streams meander, and I hear the seasons call
Water soothes the jagged stones, and sparkles in the sun
Till moon arrives and sun is gone, as if from earth it falls
Does it melt into the river's flow, and seams blend into one?
I hear the seasons call, as the seams blend into one
-Brian Strand*

Standards:



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Materials

- Pencils
- River Sense page in Discovery Guide (See copy below)

Location and Duration: On the bridge, river bank, or one of the various stream banks in the 300 acres. 20-30min.

HS Leader Role

- Make sure students stay within view of their leaders or teacher
- Make sure students do not enter the river without supervision
- Students should not be allowed to drink the river water

Procedure

Introduction: Frame this activity either with a focus on science and data collection, or on language arts skills and composition.

Lesson/Activity

1. Tell students they will be using their senses to gain information about the river. Discuss safety rules and the importance of staying in one spot as they look at, listen to, touch, and observe their environment.
2. They can record their observations using the River Sense page in the Discovery Guide. Emphasize that students take the entire allotted time to record their observations, and that they should try to be as specific as possible.
3. Use some guiding questions to help them with their observations: What plants and animals do they see? Is the river fast or slow moving? How can they determine its speed? What sounds does the river make? Can they hear animals? What does the wind sound like? How do smells near the river compare to those on a road or in a home? Does the water smell the same as tap water? What does the river water feel like? How does soil near the river feel compared to soil in the woods or schoolyard? What do the rocks in the river feel like? What emotions do they feel when they are near the river? What do they like most about being at the river?
4. Have students find a quiet spot near the river and have them sit very still to look, smell, listen, and feel (allow 10-15 minutes). During this time students can complete their observation sheets.

Conclusion: Regroup and debrief. Have students share with their classmates what their observations, insights, or questions, etc.

Extension: You may wish to provide colored pencils and/or other art supplies and direct students to use blank journal pages to sketch their observations or make other river inspired artwork.

Notes:



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River Sense Prompts

Here are some questions to ponder while you make your observations.
Use them to help you fill out the observation sheet on the next page.

Sight:

What plants and animals do you see?
Is the river fast or slow moving?
How can you determine the speed of the river?



Sound:

What sounds does the river make?
Can you hear animals?
What does the wind sound like?



Smell:

How do smells near the river compare to those on a road or in a home?
Does the water smell the same as tap water?



Touch:

What does the river water feel like?
How does soil near the river feel compared to soil in the woods or schoolyard?
What do the rocks in the river feel like?



Emotions:

What emotions do you feel when you are near the river?
What do you like most about being at the river?



River Sense Observation Sheet

What I can see:	What I can hear:
Emotions	
What it feels like:	What it smells like:



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