

ENRICHMENT: Sit Spot

Objectives and Summary: Students gain an appreciation of the natural environment via a guided and relatively isolated process of reflection and sensory awareness practice. This activity is easily adapted to many different durations, themes, and can also offer opportunities for group debriefs/share-outs. It can be repeated daily or even twice daily over the course of outdoor school. A sit spot is a 10-20 min or longer period where students sit silently apart from one another and journal or record general observations, or in response to a specific prompt. Prompts often direct students to make specific and detailed observations of the natural world as seen from their spot. Students may be directed to share their experience at the end of the period.

Background: Sit Spots are a time honored and well-loved activity in the field of outdoor education. Though some may not see the value initially, many will come to love them. Sit spots offer rare opportunities to establish a personal connection with nature and also allow students valuable time to reflect, slow down, and appreciate the sensory rich environment. You may be surprised which of your students come to love this activity...

Materials: Journals, pens or pencils. Colored pencils if desired. Sit Spot prompt cards in Toolbox.

Location and Duration: Any place large enough to accommodate your group while allowing for 20 – 30 ft spacing, and is rich in plant life/wildlife, and relatively free of distractions. This activity should take 30 – 45 minutes, including introduction and conclusion.

HS Leader Role: Leaders can help enforce spacing and silence, as well as supervise and help reconvene the group, *as well as participate and role model the activity. For their own benefit, we recommend asking leaders to do this activity along with your students.*

Procedure

Introduction: We are going to sit silently and make observations in our journals for 10 min (or however long you decide). When I am finished giving directions, you will go find a comfortable place in the forest that you find interesting and/or beautiful. While there you will be writing on (please give students a prompt. Use the ones below, or make your own). You are not allowed to speak during the sit spot, and you must be at least 30 ft away from other students. There is no such thing as “finishing early” continue the prompt or at least sit silently until the 10min is finished, and the group is called back by (pick a call back signal). I/leaders/adults will be nearby the whole time, and there is nothing dangerous to you in this forest. The 10mins won’t begin until everyone is seated and silent! Record this prompt in your journals, and begin once you are quietly seated in your spot.

Possible Prompts

- Choose a leaf, either on the ground or on a plant nearby. Make a detailed drawing, being as specific as you can. Make notes on the drawing to elaborate the things that are difficult to draw.
- Record 3 observations using 3 different sense of the world around you. Ask one question about each observation: What made that sound? Why the leaf is shaped that way? Etc. Finally, for

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each observation, record one thing that it reminds you of: That bird call sounds like a teapot, or that leaf edge looks like shark teeth. (I notice, I wonder, It reminds me of)

- Make a sound map of your environment by recording each sound you hear. You can use whatever shapes or words you choose to stand in for the sounds, but have your sit spot be at the center of the map with distant sounds near the edge of your map. At the conclusion, have students lay there maps side by side with the neighboring sit spots to get a bigger picture of the area, and a sense of how far different sounds travel.
- Reflect on your time at Waskowitz. Describe in detail one memory you'd like to never forget, or that you'd love to share with someone who was unable to attend. Be as detailed as possible in your writing.
- Draw a leaf of some other appealing object near you in the forest. Write a Haiku about it in the margin next to your drawing.
- Challenge yourself to make 10 specific observations each for the senses: Sight, Hearing, Touch, and Smell. Record them in written detail in your journal.
- See how many different types of plants you can make out from your spot. Draw a detailed leaf from each different type. Label the ones you know the names of.

Conclusion: Reconvene the group using your predetermined signal. Group up and make space and time for at least 3 students to share their work or compare sound maps. Be patient. Once a few students volunteer, it will often inspire a trend...

Notes:



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