

## Simulated Field Trip

*"A simulated field trip is a powerful way for students to create (or re-create) vivid experiences in their mind's eye. Research has shown that, with their eyes closed, people activate parts of their brain-minded systems that are often left unstimulated."* - Project

WILD

You may want to use the following simulated field trip for a variety of different reasons. Here are some suggestions for how to incorporate it into lessons or projects:

- 1) Use it on its own to help students relax. This could help relieve anxiety prior to outdoor school or help students reflect on their experiences after they return from Foothill Horizons.
- 2) Use it as a tool for students who are unable to attend outdoor school.
- 3) Use it as a jumping off point for:
  - a) a discussion about what to expect at outdoor school.
  - b) a comparative ecosystem study (see attached description of plants and animals featured in the simulation as well as the activity *Comparative Ecosystem Study*).
  - c) a chance for students to write and share their own simulations, using knowledge gained at Foothill Horizons.  
Standards: *Grade 6 ELA Writing 2.1 a and b*  
*Grade 6 ELA Listening and Speaking 1.7*

*Ask students to set aside all pens and pencils. Have them close their eyes and relax while you read the following visualization slowly and with expression. Don't forget to pause and give students time to flesh out their images.*

Close your eyes and imagine that....

You are preparing to take a walk in a brand new place. You are at the bottom of a hill and all around you are grasses blowing in the wind. You can see many shades of yellow, green and brown and feel the tickle of the grasses rubbing against your ankles. The grass is tall. It reaches almost to your knees.

As you look around, you notice that there are also trees growing on the hill. Some of them are tall and pointy with long, green needles hanging from their branches in bunches. Others are short and scrubby with flat, leathery leaves. As you breathe in, you notice that the air is dry and clean. It smells a little sweet.

Following the sweet smell, you begin to walk uphill towards one of the tall pine trees. When you get to it you notice that its trunk is covered in scaly brown bark. Reaching out, you feel that the bark is smooth and warm beneath your fingers. It is made up of many small pieces that fit together like a puzzle. Leaning closer, you realize that the sweet smell is actually coming from the bark of the tree. You put your nose right up to the sun-warmed trunk and inhale the delicious scent of butterscotch.

Right above you now, you notice a hole in the tree. It is a perfectly round hole, about the size of a quarter. There is something inside the hole, and you realize it is an acorn--a large seed with a hard shell like a nut. Looking around, you wonder what sort of animal made the hole and hid the acorn. Suddenly, you hear a sound like laughter. "Nya nya nya nya nya nyaaaaa!" Then you see a bird with a red head and white stripes under its wings swooping over your head and landing on the trunk of the tree. It turns its head to look at you as you move away and continue walking up the hill.

The path you are walking on is narrow and dry. It feels solid under your feet. The soil near the edges of the path is a deep, reddish brown and steeply cut into the side of the hill. As you climb upwards your legs begin to burn a little with the effort. But you can see that there are much taller hills and mountains in the distance.

Moving closer to the top of the hill you notice a new kind of tree. This tree is

short and scrubby and grows in dense clusters. Its bark is very smooth and very red. Its branches are gnarled and twisted. Looking from side to side you feel like you are in the middle of a cool, red maze. It is very quiet.

Suddenly, a movement in the trees catches your eye. Camouflaged into the soft leaves and soil beneath the trees, a deer is getting to its feet. You have startled it with your footsteps, but now you stand very still as it lifts its head and walks carefully away into the forest. It has big eyes and ears and leaves delicate, heart-shaped tracks behind it as it goes.

Above your head dangle small red berries. They look like tiny apples--only about the size of a pea. You reach up and pick one. It is soft and dry between your fingers and smells like a raisin. You put the berry into your mouth, chew a couple of times and swirl the flaky pieces over your tongue. The flavor is sweet, but a little bitter. You spit some tiny seeds out onto the ground and continue walking.

Now you are heading down the other side of the hill and it is shadier over here. Along the path, giant boulders protrude from the ground. They have been warmed by the sun and are still giving off some heat. The biggest boulder is about five times taller than you, and as big as a house.

You place your hands on its side and, as you look for a good place to get a grip for climbing, you feel many small, mossy plants clinging to the rock. Some of them are light green, while others are tiny, white and dry. Your fingers find a handhold and you hoist your body up onto the rock, climbing naturally without really thinking about it, until you reach the top.

From here, you have a broad view of the land around you: rolling hills dotted with boulders and many kinds of trees. To your right, you can see the silver snake of a creek cutting its way through the landscape. You flop on your stomach on the warm rock, close your eyes and feel the sun on your face.

*Plants and Animals Featured in the Simulation:*

**Ponderosa Pine-**

This tall, pointy pine is sometimes called a "puzzle tree" because its bark fits together like puzzle pieces. When warmed in the sun, its sap gives off a sweet smell.

**Acorn Woodpecker-**

These communal birds store their food (acorns) in trees known as granary trees. A granary tree may have up to 50,000 holes and serve as a storage unit for several families of woodpeckers.

**Manzanita-**

This scrubby tree likes dry soil and so it usually grows at the tops of hills. Its smooth, red bark is very distinctive, as are its berries, which the Me-wuk people use to make cider.

**Mule Deer-**

The smallest deer in North America, mule deer get their name from the large size of their ears. They are very abundant at Foothill Horizons.

**Granite boulder-**

Foothill Horizons has a lot of granitic rocks. These intrusive igneous rocks have been exposed by erosion and shaped by mechanical and chemical weathering.

