

Lesson Title – Literally: “Outside the Box”

Overview - Students will experience the outdoors through their senses and reflect/respond in both traditional and more innovative ways.

Class Objective - Overall, the objective is to move learning and reflection from the confines of 4 walls to the outdoors. In expanding the metaphor, traditional assessments are also abandoned in favor of a more reflective and open outcome.

\* It is anticipated that teachers may be uncomfortable with the concept of releasing students outdoors to undertake some of these activities quietly and individually. Setting boundaries and expectations firmly at the onset, establishing consequences for disregarding the boundaries, and following through as necessary will assist in maintaining the respect and control of the group.

Age – All ages with age-appropriate modifications.

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Materials –

- 1) Student journals or other writing materials, pens, colored pencils if desired
  - 2) Outdoor area large enough for students to sit apart from each other (physically distanced).
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Lesson Plan -

- Outdoor activities of a more reflective nature may or may not have a focus.
- Ask students to use their senses in the following:
  - Draw a sound map: In relation to their location and the features around them, where are sounds coming from? Can they identify some of these sounds? Give students a time (i.e. 10 minutes) to draw their sound maps before sharing
  - Experience the movement of air: d=Draw a map or do a journal write about the evidence:
    - SEE (grass, leaves, flags, trash moving)
    - HEAR (rustling, whistling, flag snapping, moving through pines)
    - FEEL (breeze on face, blowing hair, clothing, propelling body)
    - SMELL (pines, trash, exhaust, salt air, river, mown grass)
    - write about what this brings to mind for you (student)
- Write a haiku. A haiku is a traditional Japanese poem of three lines that do not rhyme. A haiku consists of no more than 17 syllables arranged as such:
  - Line 1: 5 syllables
  - Line 2: 7 syllables
  - Line 3: 5 syllables

Examples of traditional haikus are:

An old silent pond.

A frog jumps into the pond,

splash! Silence again.

Matsuo Basho

A summer river being crossed

how pleasing

With sandals in my hands!

Yosu Buson

More modern interpretations of the traditional form deviate from the 5-7-5 form but still require the basic principles that a haiku focuses on a brief moment in time, uses colorful imagery, and communicates an “ah-ah” moment.

Modern examples include the following:

ground squirrel

balancing the tomato

on the garden fence

Don Eulert

Nightfall,

Too dark to read the page

Too cold.

Jack Kerouac

- Other forms of poetry/train-of-thought writings are all fine too.
- Ask students to observe and/or catalog all the plants/animals they see. This again may be done individually for a teacher-determined time, following by small group sharing, following by reporting out/whole group sharing.
  - One way to give observations a specific focus is to ask students to measure a grid (square foot, yard, etc.) and observe all they see within that space.
  - Students can dig holes in mowed grass, mulched beds, or more natural field and woodland spaces and compare/contrast observations between the different habitats.
- If you could change your school yard – how would you change it?
  - This exercise may involve drawings, sharing within groups, etc.
- What is your favorite animal and why?
  - Substitute: most feared, most interesting, most like me, and include the why in each instance
  - Include illustration as an option to encourage participation from students of all reading/writing levels

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