



OO, OO, OO NATURE! (PART 2 OF 3): OBSERVING OURSELVES (OUTDOOR BASICS FOR CITY-DWELLING MIDDLE SCHOOLERS)

This lesson plan was created by Leah Guenther as part of the Acadia Teacher Fellows (ATF) program. ATFs created lesson plans are created by educators for educators. Any books or links suggested in this curriculum are not an endorsement by the National Park Service.

Grade Span	Grades 6-8
Time Span	<p>This lesson is part of a series of three lessons on basic outdoor observational skills for middle school students.</p> <p>This second lesson in the series takes approximately 90 minutes, equally divided between preparing for observations, conducting observations, and discussing what was observed.</p>
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Focus Question	What are the benefits to going outside, and how should we behave when we are out there?
Overview	<p>This lesson is part two (the second set of OOs!) in a three-part framework called “OO, OO, OO, Nature!” that teaches students about three types of outdoor observation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>O</u>bserving <u>O</u>utside: observe the natural elements at their school 2. <u>O</u>bserving <u>O</u>urselves: observe our own behavior outdoors 3. <u>O</u>bserving <u>O</u>thers: observe others’ behavior outdoors <p>The repeating “OO” mnemonic is designed to remind burgeoning nature observers of these three different ways of observing when outdoors.</p>



Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will learn about the benefits of spending time outdoors. • Students will analyze their outdoor behavior against Leave No Trace principles.
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whiteboard or chart paper to collect class thoughts during the opening discussion • Access to two websites, or printed copies of the information therein • Worksheet entitled “OO, OO, OO Nature!: Observing Ourselves” (below) for recording observations • Clipboards, pens/pencils
LESSON	
Vocabulary	<p>Observe: to notice or perceive something and register it as being significant Wellness: the active pursuit of a state of healthfulness Ethics: standards of right and wrong that govern a person’s behavior Leave No Trace: seven principles that reduce our environmental impact</p>
Teacher Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students for spending roughly 30 minutes outside. • Prepare clipboards and worksheet entitled “OO, OO, OO Nature!: Outside Observations” (below). • Prepare technology for students to access two websites.
Background	
Procedure	<p>Engage: Before heading outdoors, engage the class in a discussion about their outdoor habits with the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the benefits to going outside? 2. Are there any special rules for behavior while being outside? <p>Record these findings on a whiteboard or chart paper to refer back to at the end of the lesson.</p> <p>In pairs, have students read the Forest Service’s article, “The Wellness Benefits of the Great Outdoors” which is located at https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/wellness-benefits-great-outdoors. After reading the article, have students fill out Part A on their worksheet. They will define the three types of wellness (physical, mental, and community), and give evidence from the article about how being outside can improve each of these wellness types.</p>



- In the first column, they'll list the three types of wellness (physical, mental, community).
- In the second column, they'll detail the theory about how nature helps improve each type of wellness
- In the third column, they will list the evidence (a quote) from the article that proves the theory about each type of wellness
- In the final column, students who are able may fill in any additional evidence from their own life that they could add in order to further make the case for this type of wellness being affected by spending time outdoors.

Explore:

Head outdoors, encouraging students to spend roughly 15 minutes exploring the outdoor space at your school, which could be anything: the playground, your parking lot, a grassy field, a small corner with trees. Give the following directives:

- 1) Stay within the physical parameters set by the teacher.
- 2) Commit to your own personal exploration (do not involve or talk with other students)

Explanation:

First, gather students after about 15 minutes, or whatever amount of time is a bit more than students might be used to spending alone outside, without talking. The goal is to allow students who might not spend much time outdoors to observe how they respond. Ask students to record on Section B of their worksheet how they felt while outdoors, expecting results ranging from "calm" to "anxious," "curious" to "bored." Convene a class discussion about how spending this quiet time outside affected each of them.

Next, while still outside, tie the conversation back to the three types of wellness that you discussed earlier: physical, mental, and community. Ask students to look around the outdoor space in order to see how it could be used for these types of wellness. Ask the following questions while they take notes on their worksheets:

- How could we *experience* this wellness (physical, mental, or community) in this space?
- How could we *improve* this wellness (physical, mental, or community) in this space?

Extension:



	<p>Return to the classroom, and introduce the concept of “outdoor ethics.” Direct students to the Leave No Trace website at https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/. As they read the principles, have students take notes on Section C of their worksheet, where they’ll record each principle and why it’s important. Leave the last column blank for now.</p>
<p>Wrap-Up</p>	<p>Evaluate:</p> <p>First, to conclude this lesson on Observing Ourselves, circle back to the notes taken at the beginning of the class. Ask students what they as a class could add now to the questions they were first asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the benefits to going outside? 2. Are there any special rules for behavior while being outside? <p>Next, shift the class discussion to how each student personally fares on the Leave No Trace principles. Using your students’ habits as a guide, ask questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could we do a better job of respecting wildlife? For example, do we need to squish insects? • Could we do a better job of handling our waste? For example, have we ever left trash behind outside? • Could we be more considerate of others outside? For example, could we sometimes control our noise levels better than we do? <p>After the discussion, have each student fill in the final column of Section C on the worksheet. Although all principles won’t apply, have them commit to at least 2-3 principles that they can improve upon to leave less of a trace outside. Conclude with a class discussion of students sharing their commitments to improvement.</p>



OO, OO, OO NATURE!: OBSERVING OURSELVES

A. NOTES ON “WELLNESS BENEFITS OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS”:

Type of Wellness	Theory about Nature’s Benefits	Evidence from Article	Evidence from Your Life
1.			
2.			
3.			

B. MONITORING WELLNESS OUTDOORS:

Notes on how you felt outdoors: _____

Type of Wellness	How could we experience this wellness in our space?	How could we improve this wellness in our space?
1. Physical Wellness		
2. Mental Wellness		
3. Wellness in the Community		

C. GAUGING OUR OUTDOOR IMPACT:



Leave No Trace Principle	Why It's Important	How You Can Improve
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		