

Reflection and Observation Activities

CHICAGO RIVER FIELDTRIP ACTIVITY

Summary

Students take time alone and in quiet to get in tune with the river and the environment they are in as well as to think about the experience and what it means to them.

Background

There are many ways in which to encourage your students to more carefully examine their surroundings. Here are some suggestions, but feel free to develop your own ideas. Following these suggestions are worksheets you can photocopy and give to your students to help them record their observations and reflections. Alternatively, you can have your students bring their journals.

Reflection and observation activities are an important component of any river trip. Many students have never been in the woods or near a river, or at least not the Chicago River. Reflection and observation activities allow students the time to really notice their surroundings. Often, they help students make an emotional connection with the environment which can serve as a foundation and inspiration for future learning.

Reflection and observation activities can be done at anytime during the field trip, beginning, middle or end. Unlike other field trip activities which build group learning skills, observation and reflection activities focus on individual expression.

Procedure

For information on planning and organizing a field trip and for safety tips, visit our web site at www.chicagoriver.org/education, then click on field trips.

Please see the next sheet for directions for each of the observation and reflection activities.

Grade Level: K – 12th
(depending on activity)

Duration: 10 – 20 min

Objectives:

1. Students will develop observation and reflection skills.

Materials:

- ◆ Photocopies of any worksheets associated with activity (one per student)
- ◆ Other materials as listed in individual procedures.

Standards:

Variable depending on activity

Solo time

Seat students at least 5 ft from other students. Have the students be perfectly quiet and still for anywhere from 1 minute to 10 minutes (or more). Encourage students to stay in the present, to use their four senses (all but taste), and to focus on their feelings (are they feeling peaceful, anxious, happy, sad, etc.) While they are silent you can have them journal, draw, or write a poem. You can also have them record what they observe through four of their senses (all but taste). In their book *Keeping a Nature Journal*, Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth suggest the following for journaling: "...gather your eyes, take a deep breath, and ask yourself: 'What is happening outdoors, this particular season, this time of day, and in this particular place where I live?' ...Be very quiet, be very still. Slow your breathing..."

Perspective challenge

Have students draw the entire length of the river they can see. Then have them draw a 1 foot by 1 foot section of their choice. Then have them draw a 1 inch by 1 inch section within the 1 foot by 1 foot section. Have students share their drawings. Ask students to share how their perspective changed. If there were things they hadn't noticed until they got up close and limited their field of view.

Changing viewpoint

Have students observe an area (perhaps as part of solo time) and draw the scene for accuracy. Then have them draw the same scene to convey the feelings they have about being in that place. Then when they get back to school have them (without referring to their earlier drawings) draw the place from memory. Have the students compare their drawings and discuss the differences and similarities between their drawings and why they chose to draw what they did.

Sound map

Ask the students what sounds they have heard since coming to the site. Then have the students sit quietly (perhaps as part of solo time) and have them draw a map of all the sounds that they hear. Have them identify where the sounds came from (in front of them, behind them, above them, etc.) and what they think it might be. Compare what they heard when they were paying attention to what they heard when they were going about their routine.

Nature walk

Take your students on a walk along the river. While you are walking give your students specific things to look for. This will help focus their attention.

Write a postcard

At the end of the field trip, before students pack up their belongings and leave the river, have them sit down and write and draw a postcard to themselves or to their family. Pass out blank cardstock cut in four. On one side students should draw something that captured their imagination on the back left side they should write about what they experienced and how they felt at the river today. On the back right side they should address the postcard to themselves or their family. You may want to have the students pre-address and stamp the postcards before they leave for the field trip so that you can mail them on your way back to the school.

Reflecting questions

On a sheet of paper or in their journals, have students write several of the following questions before the field trip. The questions are just suggestions, feel free to develop your own questions which will spark your students' thinking. At the end of the field trip, have students sit at least 5 feet apart from each other, preferably in a natural area. Give students 10 minutes.

Possible Questions:

Name three things that stuck in your mind about the field trip experience.

Friends of the Chicago River



How did being in nature and/or in the river make you feel?

What have you learned about yourself?

What connections do you see between this experience and what you've learned in school?

How did this experience challenge your assumptions about the river and nature in the Chicago area?

Solo Time: Using your Senses

Sit very quietly, so quietly that you can hear yourself breathing. Close your eyes for a minute. Now open them and record what you see, hear, smell and feel.

I see:	I hear:
I smell:	I feel:

Perspective Challenge Drawings

Sit or stand on the banks of the river. Take a moment to look around. You will be doing three different drawings of what you see.

Draw the entire stretch of river in front of you:

Now choose an area as wide and as long as your arm and draw only that area:

Now within that smaller area you just drew, pick an area as long and as wide as your thumb and draw only that area:

Changing View Point Drawings

Look around and choose something that interests you that you would like to draw. It could be as big as a tree or the river or as small as an acorn or fallen leaf. You will be drawing your chosen object several times.

Draw your chosen object as accurately as you can:

Draw your chosen object to express how you feel about it:

Back at school, draw your chosen object from memory:

Sound Map

Place an X on the map below where you hear a sound coming from - is it coming from in front of you, behind you, to your right or to your left? Write what you think the sound is next to the X. Keep adding an X for every single sound you hear. How quiet a sound can you hear? Can you hear a leaf falling off a tree, or a butterfly flying by?

X

I am here

River Nature Walk

Walk slowly and quietly, trying not to make a single sound. The quieter you are, the more you will see. Can you find these things?

Draw what you find below.

Something as small as a penny?

Something the exact same size as your hand?

Something just as tall as you are?