




Learning
in your forest

Free downloadable lesson plan: English Lesson Plan - lower KS2 (years 3 and 4)

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The Forestry Commission (FC) looks after more than 1500 woods and forests in England - together they make up the Public Forest Estate. Forests provide plenty of inspiration to enable children to compose poetry and write stories. A forest visit also provides numerous topics suitable for non-fiction reading and writing.

Curriculum links:

Spoken word: Speaking audibly, giving descriptions, building vocabulary.

Preparing and listening to poems, recognising different forms of poetry, participating in performances.

Reading: Comprehension (increasing familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends).

Writing: Composition.

Before your visit to the forest:

- Before coming on your school trip, study the poem 'Tribute to Trees,' by Elizabeth Barling (see end of lesson plan for copy of poem).
- Talk about trees and how and where they grow – if we provide the right conditions for trees to grow, how many things do they give us in return?
- The way in which we use wood has changed over time – discuss which of the wooden items in the poem are still relevant today. Can the children think of new uses to replace some of the more outdated ones from the poem?
- Ask the children to explain what the man promises the tree at the end of the poem.

To find out how the Forestry Commission works today to fulfil the promise given in the poem, visit www.forestry.gov.uk/learning, where you will find an informative, child-friendly photo show (with notes and discussion questions). You will also find some useful health and safety advice for your visit.

For your visit to the forest, you will need to bring:

- Paper and writing materials (pens/pencils)
- Clipboards
- Plastic covers for clipboards in the event of rain
- Tree ID guides
- Laminated photos of a selection of forest creatures (suitable for an acrostic poem)
- Voice recording equipment

Wood you believe it?

As an alternative to the poem, or in addition, use 'Wood you believe it?' (See end of lesson plan). The children have to identify the 30 things mentioned in the text that come from trees.

Forest Lesson Plan

Starter activity

Guess what it is?

Ask the children to work in pairs and explore a small area of forest and collect one or two woodland objects, which they should keep hidden.

The children take it in turns to describe one of the objects to their partner, using only single words.

Encourage the children to think about what the object looks like, how big is it, its shape, colour and texture.

Their partners have to guess what it is.

Reveal the object at the end of each turn.



1. Acrostic Poems

Forests are great places for wildlife. They provide a range of different habitats (places where animals and minibeasts can make their homes), as well as supplying the food that they need to eat.

Can the children name any woodland animals, birds or minibeasts that they might find in a UK forest?

Show the animal pictures that you have brought as a visual reminder.

The children are now going to select one of these animals as inspiration for an acrostic poem.

Acrostic:

Explain to the children that an acrostic poem is where the first letter of each line spells out the name of a forest animal, bird or minibeast. Read aloud the example below and discuss the use of simile ('running like the wind') and metaphor ('eyes are brown conkers') if appropriate for your group.

Darting through the woodland
Ears that twitch at every sound
Eyes are brown conkers
Running like the wind



In small groups, choose an animal and write an acrostic poem for it.

Select one person to be the scribe for each group.

Once the acrostic poems are complete, ask each group to make a ground picture of their animal with its name written next to it in sticks, stones or cones.

Each group can perform their acrostic poem while the rest of the class admire the artwork.



2. Haiku

Haiku:

Explain to the children that every type of tree has its own special name and features, and that we can identify a tree by looking at the shape, colour and arrangement of its leaves, as well as its twigs, bark and seeds.

Spend some time noticing the differences between the trees in the forest, and identifying some of them.

Next, read aloud a haiku inspired by a particular tree species:



Oak

Haiku the oak tree, by Dorothy Holmes

Black against pale sky
Shadow in the pouring rain
Barren silhouette

Beech wood haiku, by Res John Burman

These old beech woods wait
For the joyful sound of pigs
Autumn's mast rights feast



Beech

Pine tree haiku, by FC ranger

Dark, spiky needles
Green throughout cold winter months
Cones woody and brown



Sycamore

Sycamore haiku, by FC ranger

Helicopter seeds
Amid golden autumn leaves
Sycamore beauty



Pine

Ask the children what 'syllables' are, and then read the haiku again, asking them to count how many syllables it consists of.

Traditional haiku should have three lines and a total of 17 syllables - 5 in the first line, then 7, then 5 (but you can allow some deviation from this if you want to!)

The children can then work in pairs, groups, or individually, to come up with a haiku for a tree in the forest.

Again, the activity can finish with a performance.

3. Whole Class Story Telling

30 Forest Words (to print and cut out)

For appropriate background information to this activity it is essential for the class to have viewed and discussed the Forestry Commission photo show.

Randomly hand out the Forest word cards. *These are numbered so that your story follows a logical sequence and will dictate the order in which the children participate.*

The children are now going to collectively tell the story of the forest as it is cared for today. The child with card number one starts the story (thereafter the children take turns in card number order). Each child has to weave their word into their part of the story, with each child following on from the previous child. Everyone participates until all the words have been used and the forest cycle story is complete.

Encourage the children to maintain the interest of their listeners by speaking as imaginatively as they can, i.e. really setting the scene through the use of descriptive language. For example, describing the movement, sounds or smells of the forest associated with their words.



Harvester – felling trees



Forwarder – stacking logs at roadside



Timber lorry – taking logs to sawmill

4. Additional 'Fill-In' Activities:

Children often work at different rates so use these activity suggestions as 'fillers' for those who have completed their work first.

i) Wands and rhymes - encourage the children to find a short stick to be a wand, and magically turn ordinary forest finds into something fantastical!

For example, a piece of a pine cone becomes a single scale from the tail of a baby dragon, or an acorn cup the soup bowl belonging to a forest fairy.

The children could even create their own magical rhyme to recite when turning objects into something else, for example;

**"Close your eyes for your delight
fairy dust gives magic sight
wiggle your wings, waggle your toes
open your eyes, now what do you suppose..... it could be?"**

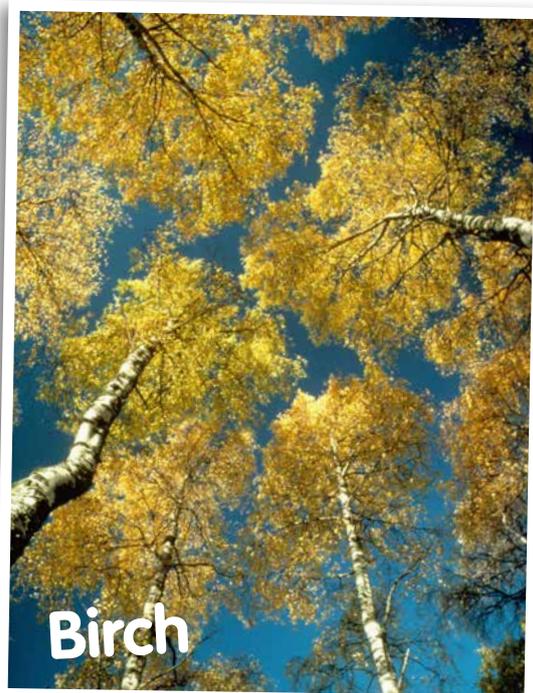
ii) Fantasy adventure story settings - ask the children to use natural materials to create a small scale model of a scene from an amazing fantasy adventure story. What sort of landscape, structures and mythical creatures can they create?

iii) Alliterate while you walk - explain to the children what we mean by alliteration (the repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of each or most of the words in a sentence, phrase or description) and offer some examples (see box).

As you walk through the forest, ask the children to throw as many alliterations inspired by their environment into their conversation as they can.

**The beautiful birch bends in the breeze
Sycamore sways in the sunshine
Terrific trees**

An adult could note them down to re-visit in the classroom, or you could record them on a voice recorder.



Follow up work - back at school

i) Forest folklore and fairy tales - there are plenty of examples of well known stories set in forests, e.g. Hansel and Gretel, Robin Hood, Baba Yaga and Shakespeare's, 'A Mid-summer Night's Dream'.

Which fairy stories, myths and legends are the children already familiar with? Ask the children to write their own woodland fairy story or legend using their recent forest experience as inspiration.

ii) Non-fiction reading and recording/writing - what information can the children find out about jobs in the forestry industry? Search for roles including tree surgeon, forest ranger, wildlife ranger, horse logger, timber haulage driver and green woodworker. Which aspect of multi-purpose forestry – people, timber or wildlife – would the children most like to work in and why?



Wildlife



Timber



People

5. TREE
GUARDS

10. HARVESTER

15. PICNIC
TABLE

20. DENS

25. CARE

30. WILDLIFE

4. SAPLINGS

9. CHAINSAW

14. WOOD

19. CHILDREN
PLAYING

24. SQUIRREL

29. TIMBER

3. NURSERY

8. THINNING

13. SAWMILL

18. CYCLIST

23.
WOODLOUSE

28. PEOPLE

2. SEEDS

7. EVERGREEN

12. TIMBER
LORRY

17. DOG
WALKER

22. ROBIN

27.
SUSTAINABLE

1. FOREST

6. DECIDUOUS

11. FOWARDER

16. FIREWOOD

21. HABITATS

26. REPLACE



'Tribute to Trees'

by Elizabeth Barling.

Said the tree to the man:

"I ask but little of you, light and space that I may grow to serve you.
In return, I give you winter shelter from wind and rain, and grateful summer shade.
I provide the door to your home and the beams and rafters that support the roof.
You tread my boards as you cross the floor to eat at my table.
Mine are the logs that blaze upon your hearth, mine the comfortable pipe and
the matches with which you tend it.
And, when the time for sleep is come, my wooden bed awaits you.

At work, mine are the handles of your tools; at leisure, mine your wheelbarrow, your stick,
your bat, your newspaper.

At life's start I rocked you in my cradle and at your journey's end, my coffin will take charge
of your relinquished body.

There has always been music for you in my leaves, beauty in my changing colours,
nourishment in my fruits. With trees around, no man is comfortless."

Said the man to the tree:

"I will spare you the light and the space that you need. I will secure that, when you are old,
another generation shall replace you. I will tend your offspring in their youth, knowing that
my descendants will benefit by their maturity.

I will value you as you deserve - and, emulating your aspiring boughs, look up, in gratitude,
towards the stars."

In the late 1960's Elizabeth Barling set out to create Ravenshill Woodland Reserve in Worcestershire. She published a book about this in 1982 called 'Birth of a Nature Reserve.'



Wood you believe it?

There are 30 things mentioned in this excerpt that come from trees. Can you find them?

I wake up as the sun peeps through the curtains at the window frame.
It's going to be another hot day!

I jump out of my wooden bed, on to the floorboards, nearly falling over
a pile of books on the floor and head to the bathroom.

I have a wash using the palm oil soap and find a new loo roll, taking the
old cardboard tube away for recycling.

When I'm dressed I head down for breakfast, sliding down the wooden bannisters as usual!

"Hi Dad!" I call, and he puts down his newspaper and coffee and gets me a cup of tea.
"You're noisy this morning" says Dad, reaching for the aspirins.

I look in the new oak kitchen cupboards but don't fancy the brazil nut muesli for breakfast,
so I make some toast and spread it with olive oil margarine and marmalade.

I check the inside of my lunch box. Mum has made me a hazelnut and chocolate spread
sandwich and there are some dried apricots and a coconut chocolate bar too.

She's forgotten the fresh fruit, so I grab a banana from the wooden fruit bowl. There's a
carton of apple juice for my drink.

Time to go! I check my schoolbag and I've got my pencils, eraser, exercise books and
reading book.

(I've got some chewing gum that my friend gave me too).

I say goodbye and then run next door to get a lift with my friend's
mum and we wait under the sycamore tree while she gets the car
out, enjoying the shade.

I'd better use some of Mum's shea butter sun cream so I don't
get burnt today.

See you later!

*What things do you see or use during the day that come
from trees?*

See page 10 for the highlighted answers.

**Tell us
what you think...**

We'd like to know what
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Commission learning resource.

Please visit
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online questionnaire.

Many thanks for
your help.

Wood you believe it?

There are 30 things mentioned in this excerpt that come from trees.
Can you find them?

I wake up as the sun peeps through the curtains at the **window frame**.
It's going to be another hot day!

I jump out of my **wooden bed**, on to the **floorboards**, nearly falling over
a pile of **books** on the floor and head to the bathroom.

I have a wash using the **palm oil soap** and find a new **loo roll**, taking the
old **cardboard tube** away for recycling.

When I'm dressed I head down for breakfast, sliding down the **wooden bannisters** as usual!

"Hi Dad!" I call, and he puts down his **newspaper** and **coffee** and gets me a cup of **tea**.
"You're noisy this morning" says Dad, reaching for the **aspirins**.

I look in the new **oak kitchen cupboards** but don't fancy the **brazil nut muesli** for breakfast,
so I make some toast and spread it with **olive oil margarine** and **marmalade**.

I check the inside of my lunch box. Mum has made me a **hazelnut** and **chocolate** spread
sandwich and there are some dried **apricots** and a **coconut** chocolate bar too.

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carton of **apple juice** for my drink.

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