

Class Tree Through the Seasons

Grade(s): K-6	Topic: Trees, Seasons, Plant Parts, Plant Life Cycle	Season: All
Timing: 60 minutes, including 5 minute RPK, 5 minute introduction, 20 minute outdoor class tree observation, 25 minute book construction, and 5 minute conclusion Follow Up: Ideally the outdoor observation and book construction will take place in every season of the school year, and students will have a special time to share their books with parents and friends when they are finished, perhaps outside around an orchard tree at a picnic at the end of the school year!		
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will observe a deciduous orchard tree in each season of the year, and will be able to relate the changes they observe with the seasons and what they are learning about the trees' life cycle• Students will be able to explain that trees are dormant in the winter with little or no leaves and buds, that buds turn into leaves and blossoms in the spring, that blossoms begin to form into fruit in the late spring and summer, and that fruit is harvested from orchard trees in the fall, containing seeds that can be planted into new trees		
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A Busy Year</i> by Leo Leoni or another book that goes through the yearly life cycle of a deciduous (preferably fruit-bearing) tree.• Sturdy, laminated Class Tree sign with 2 or 4 holes punched for hanging• Sturdy string to hang Class Tree sign• Orchard map (be sure to consult before students pick tree, to make sure variety is known)• "Leaves: Food Factories" and "Why Leaves Change Colors" background information sheets• <i>Class Tree Trivia</i> worksheet (optional)• Book-making materials like construction paper, markers/crayons, pencils, paper, glue		
Degree of need for extra teacher or parent helper? Low		
Journal Prompt: What does the class tree look like today? How will it look in 2 months? How did it look 2 months ago? How do the orchard trees change through the seasons?		
Lesson Sequence: Reactivate Prior Knowledge (5 minutes) Ask students to put the seasons of the year in order and to tell you what months of the year are in which one. What are the main aspects of every season? Introduction (5 minutes) Start by reading <i>A Busy Year</i> by Leo Leoni, or another book about the yearly cycle of a tree, aloud. Tell the class that today they are going to meet their class orchard tree and find out more about it! They will observe this tree over the year and see how it changes in the different seasons, just like the tree in the book. Outdoor Observation (20 minutes) Take the class outside to pick their class orchard tree and hang up the class tree sign. Have		

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the students fill out the Class Tree Trivia sheet and sketch what the tree looks like. Explain that they will need the sketch inside for an art project, and they should pay attention to what is special about the tree *right now* that they don't think will be on it in the other seasons.

Class Tree Book Construction (25 minutes)

The book can be made in one sitting, but is better done in pieces, one season at a time, over the course of the school year. Explain to the class that they are going to make their own class tree story! They'll draw the class tree and tell what happens to it during one full year starting with the season we are in right now, Fall. Have the students illustrate the class tree story using construction paper, crayons/markers, tissue paper, and glue. For the written part of their book, make sure they describe what they see happening on the tree, but you can make it much more creative. Maybe they want to write a poem for every season. Maybe they want to make up a story with the tree and schoolyard ecosystem animals as characters like in *A Busy Year*. Maybe they want the book to be a more scientific field guide to their tree. In any case, have them use vocabulary from the plant life cycle and seasonal lessons suited to the season they are in.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Have students share their illustrations and writing of the class tree in today's season. What did they notice? How has the class tree changed since last season? How do they think it will change next season?

Vocabulary:

Will vary by season. See season and plant life cycle – appropriate sections in glossary and/or curriculum for specific words.

Extensions / Homework Ideas:

The class tree observations through the seasons can be accompanied by observations of other aspects of the schoolyard ecosystem. Every student or group can pick a different plant or animal or section of the schoolyard to observe at the same time as the tree, and they all can be combined into a Field Guide. See Field Guide worksheets for a basic format to start your field guide data collection with.