



# Terrific Trees

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Cycles Change over Time

### Materials

- *A Log's Life* by Wendy Pfeffer
- forest or wooded area, even a stand of a few trees will work
- empty egg cartons
- clipboards for each child made of cardboard, paper attached with binder clip
- pencils, markers, crayons (if children are not carrying their own supplies)
- magnifying boxes and glasses

### Enduring Understandings

- All things change, and can adapt to change.
- Change is always happening.
- Cycles have no beginning and no end; they are continuous.
- Trees change over the seasons in the same pattern, year after year.



### Objectives

- Children demonstrate that trees are plants and go through growth cycles just as they do.
- Children cultivate an appreciation for trees.
- Children show interest and curiosity about the changes they observe in the tree(s).
- Children play comfortably in the woods.

## A Tree *by any other name*

**Seedling:** A tree less than 2 inches in diameter

**Sapling:** A small tree 2–4 inches in diameter at breast height

**Pole:** Trees 5–7 inches in diameter at breast height

**Mature Tree:** A tree greater than 7 inches in diameter at breast height.

### Directions

It can be helpful for children to develop their “owl eyes” (see p.131) prior to beginning this experience.

1. Read *A Log's Life*. Give children time to look at the pages to see how much is going on in the log. Prepare them for a trip to the woods by creating guidelines for being in the

woods. (See p.41 for tips on creating guidelines for outdoor experiences with children.)

2. As you are about to enter the woods, stop and whisper that these trees have many stories to tell but we need to be ready to hear and “read” them. Tell children to use their “owl eyes” as they look carefully, listen, and reflect on what they’ve observed. Then we’ll have stories to share!
3. Once in the woods, allow children time to explore. Get down on the ground with them as they look for seeds, animal homes, and leaves.
4. Help find and identify a seedling, sapling, pole and a mature tree. As you are walking through the woods, call out “sapling” and help everyone find a sapling, one hand should be able to wrap around one. Find a mature tree to hug (a mature tree takes two or more arms for a hug).
5. Look for a downed tree such as the one in the story. If you can find one, look for many of the creatures that were in *A Log’s Life*. Use the magnifying boxes to exam the creatures.
6. If the tree is rotting and its wood is easily crumbled, bring some back in order to make paper. (See “Paper Making,” in *How Are We Connected*, p.206.)
7. Children should find a special spot to sit in alone during this time in the woods. Have the children find their spot and sit there with their journals. Tell the children to draw or write about a tree they can see from their spot.
8. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by sharing the “stories” children found in the wood, and engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

## Discussion Questions

- Tell me about your tree.
- What did you notice?
- How many different types of trees did you see?
- What else did you notice with your owl eyes?
- What do you think this place will look like in the fall/winter/spring/summer? What will be different? What will be the same?

## Tree Song!

Sung to the tune of  
“Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”

*Children stand like trees, hands in the air,  
feet rooted in the ground as they sing:*

Roots, trunk, branches and twigs,  
(Branch and twigs),

Roots, trunk, branches and twigs,  
(Branch and twigs),

And buds that turn into leaves!

Roots, trunk, branches and twigs,  
(Branch and twigs!)

## Extensions

- **Be a Friend to Trees** by Patricia Lauber
- **A Tree Is A Plant** by Clyde Robert Bulla.
- **My Mother Talks to Trees** by Doris Gove
- Collect seeds in the woods. See “Seed Hunt and Sort,” p.143.
- In the woods or back in the classroom, put the “Tree Life Cycle Cards” (Appendix, p.245) into the correct sequence. Have children work in small groups to put the cards in order, then write a story about the tree’s life cycle.
- Another option: add a string to each Tree Life Cycle card. Place a card around a student’s neck so the card hangs on the student’s back, visible only to others. When the cards are passed out, those with cards must put themselves in order even though they don’t know what stage is on their back. Once the group feels they are in the correct order, the students without cards can tell the story of a tree’s life cycle and let the other students know if they were correct in their ordering of the story. Another option is to have the students with cards on their back not be able to talk. They must put the story in order without talking and use other means of communicating to complete the task.
- Return to this place often, asking children to return to their personal sit spots. Have the journal about what’s happening right now. Compare this visit to previous visits and talk about cycles and changes.