

Forest Tales

Introduction

From folk myths to fairy tales to Hollywood movies, forests and woodlands have provided a setting for some of our most-loved stories. To some they're wildlife-packed wonderlands. To others, they're mysterious, even scary. Whatever their role, people have been fascinated by them for centuries.

This activity prompts young people to explore forest and woodlands-set tales. It then challenges them to visit a local forest or woodlands, absorb the ambience and gather inspiration, before producing their very own literary creations.

Duration



3-6 hours

Location



This activity can be delivered on youth group/school grounds or at home, and involves a trip to a local forest or woodlands.

Topics



History



Art & Design



English

Learning Outcomes

Young people will:

- Develop knowledge about the literary sub-genre of forest and woodlands-set myths, fairy tales and folk tales.
- Develop their creative writing skills.
- Develop simple mindfulness techniques.



You Will Need



Pens, pencils and paper.



A device to take photographs and record video/audio.



Art materials for your illustrations.

Follow These Steps

1 Research

Explore forest and woodlands-set tales.

Presented alongside this guide is a set of slides that contains a bibliography of books that you might use. Explore one or more of these and think about/discuss the following:

- What role do forests and woodlands play in the stories?
- How are they described or shown in pictures?
- What is the style and tone of these works? Are they wonderful, happy or even scary?
- What types of language are used?
- What are the key themes?
- What are the common story and character types?



2 Get inspired

Visit a local forest or woodland and gather inspiration for your own forest tales. Here's a few methods that you can use to focus your minds and prompt creative thinking:

Take pictures

Photograph or draw interesting things. This might be textures, shapes, colours, shades or objects. Do they remind you of anything? What type of design and art styles do they remind you of?

Take sound recordings

Audio can be incredibly exciting! Capturing sounds will allow you to return to a moment and reconnect with it. Do you know the source of all of the sounds? Can you imagine what is producing those that you don't recognise?

Take a mindful moment

The things you capture and remember don't have to be visual or audible. They can be feelings and moods too. Taking a mindful moment can allow these responses to form. Try the following mindful methods:

- Close your eyes, take deep, slow breaths and listen to the noises around you. How many can you hear? Are there sounds that you don't recognise or hadn't heard previously? What feelings and ideas do they inspire?
- Pick up something natural from the ground. How does it feel? How does it smell? Does this surprise you?
- Stand in one position for 1 minute. Look at the scene before you. Make a list of all of the words that come to mind. They can be any type of word, from descriptive to abstract responses.

3 Create

Head back to your group setting and get creative!

Look back at your answers to the questions from Part 1. Review your images, notes and recordings from your trip to a local forest or woodlands. Channel these in to the creation of your own forest and woodlands-set stories. Don't forget to give your stories even more impact by creating your own illustrations.



4 Present

Finally, it's time to share your creations with the world. Here's a few ideas of how you can do this:

- Bind all of the group's stories together to form an Anthology Book. This can be added to the book collection at your setting.
- Display your creations on the wall at your setting and make a 'creative corridor'. You could even make this space immersive by adding nature elements, such as branches and leaves.
- Present your creations on social media and tag us!

What Next?

- Start a nature-themed book club with friends. Try to read a different book every month that connects to or is set in nature. Check out the Forest and Woodland Stories bibliography, presented alongside this guide, to get you started. Read the books, meet up, discuss them, and get inspired!

How Can This Activity Connect to Eco-Schools?



This activity can be used to support work on the Eco-Schools Healthy Living topic. Getting out into nature, pausing, and breathing in it's wonder and detail is a great way to improve mental wellbeing. It's also a great way to develop a deeper connection with our natural world.