

# Nebraska State Parks Centennial Lesson Plan



**Activity Title:** Compare and Contrast Nature through Nature Journaling.

**Grade Level:**

Lower Elementary  
Upper Elementary  
Middle school

**Methods:**

During this activity students will record their nature observations. You will be using three nature journaling prompts to familiarize students with deeper observations. Then students will create sound maps using their new tuned-in observations skills. This lesson is best done outside in any area.

**Materials:**

Nature Journal, notebook or paper  
Clipboard  
Pencil  
Colored pencils

**State Standards:**

SS 2.3.2.b;

When we make nature observations, we are using cross-cutting concepts, which may include skills such as recognizing patterns, observing the structure and function of living things and noting changes in the environment. Nature journaling can promote the recognition of natural phenomena and encourage inquiry and research skills as one seeks to understand the phenomena they observe.

**Objective:**

Students will 1) learn how to observe and record their natural surroundings through the art and science of nature journaling, 2) create a sound map.

**Background:**

When observation is nurtured and purposely strengthened it changes the way we experience the world. Deep observation is a skill that is learned. Nature journaling is a helpful tool that can give purpose to our observations. Instead of passively observing the world around us, “journaling sharpens and focuses observational skills and provides reliable documentation of past events.” When you create time to journal and exercise your observation skills, imagination and critical thinking are unleashed.

**Vocabulary:**

Scientific Illustration: art is used to communicate scientific subjects

Phenomena: a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question

Observation: the action or process of observing something or someone carefully or in order to gain information

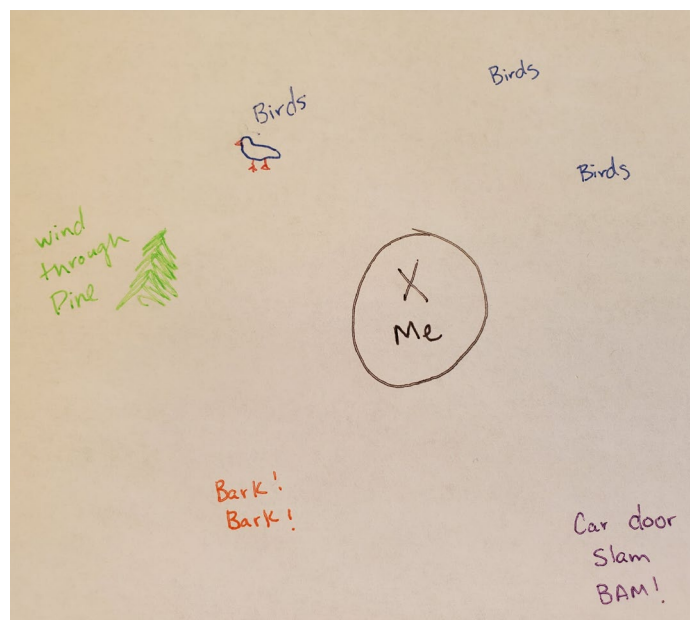
## Step-By-Step Instructions:

### Observations Introduction

1. In an outdoor setting, introduce three observation prompts to your students, I notice, I wonder, It reminds me of.
  - a. **I Notice...**: Give students the opportunity to say all of their observations out loud. This can be a social activity done with the entire classroom. Instead of censoring responses, encourage and build off what students are saying.
  - b. **I Wonder...**: As students are making their, 'I Notice', observations, questions may naturally occur and need no prompting. Encourage any questions to be said out loud within the group. You can prompt students to ask questions by moving on from I Notice to I Wonder.
  - c. **It Reminds Me Of...** Use this prompt to encourage students to connect their observations to their memories.

### Sound Maps

2. In an outdoor area have students find a comfortable spot to sit. Have students draw two intersecting lines. Explain where they are sitting is the center of the map. Have students label directions on their map.
3. Show students an example of a sound map. What are some things that this person was hearing?



4. For a designated period of time, students will record everything they hear as a visual representation on their sound maps. When they hear a sound they will draw a symbol or write the sound on their sound map in the direction and distance associated with where they are sitting.
5. After, have students share their sound maps. How did their representations of sounds differ? How were they the same? Are all the maps the same? Why or why not?
6. Have students do these observations in different outdoor areas and have them compare the results. Example: What sounds did they hear at a State Park versus their schoolyard?

### Focus Questions:

1. What observations were made that were not noticed before this exercise?

2. What sounds were brought into sharper focus?

**Resources:**

Keeping a Nature Journal by Clare Walker Leslie & Charles E. Roth

The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling by John Muir Laws

The Boy Who Drew Birds by Jacqueline Davies

Sound Map Example: <https://www.sharingnature.com/sound-map.html>

*Adapted from, 'Opening the World Through Nature Journaling', John Muir Laws and the California Native Plant Society*