

## **Adopt a Tree**

Modified from Project Learning Tree, Pre K-8, Environmental Education Activity Guide, American Forest Foundation, Seventh Printing, 2013.

### **Introduction**

In this activity, students “adopt” a tree, deepening their awareness of individual trees over time and encouraging a greater understanding and appreciation of their local environment.

### **Background**

Trees are invaluable assets to our communities. They give us flowers, fall colors, and lovely scents. They provide homes for birds, squirrels, butterflies, and other wildlife. Their branches create beautiful shapes that soften the landscape. They shade and cool our streets and buildings and insulate our homes from cold winds.



## Doing the Activity

### Part A – Growing Up Together

- 1.) Take the students outside to a grove of trees. Give students a few minutes to use their senses of smell, touch, hearing, and seeing to get acquainted with the area. Choose a specific tree to observe.
- 2.) Ask students to volunteer to describe the tree, using first their sense of sight and then their other senses. Students can write down descriptive words in their journals. Ask students to write down and complete this sentence, “The tree is \_\_\_\_.”
- 3.) Ask students whether they think the tree is alive. Ask students how they know whether the tree is alive or not.
- 4.) Ask students these questions for discussion:
  - How are the trees here alike?
  - How are the trees here different?
  - Are all the trees here alive?
  - What do trees give to the students?
  - What do trees give to the environment?

## **Part B – My Favorite Tree**

- 1.) Ask students to name something that is their very own or is special to them in some way. For example, one person might mention a pet and another might mention a present received from a relative or close friend.
- 2.) Explain that each person will choose his or her own special tree to adopt. With younger students, you can have the whole group adopt a particular tree. Explain that how they select the tree is up to them. Some students may choose the tallest tree. Others may choose the cutest tree. Some may choose an average looking tree, then discover that there's more to it than meets the eye. No matter which tree they choose, students should be able to say why they chose it.
- 3.) Provide each student with a small journal and explain that students should use their journals to record observations and answer questions about their trees.
- 4.) Give students a copy of the "Adopt a Tree Activities" and have them do the activities. Ask students to write and draw their observations and responses in their journals.
- 5.) Ask students what they now know about the tree and what they would like to find out. Have students write questions about the tree in their journals.

### Part C – Looking at Leaves

- 1.) Take students outside and ask each to collect 3 to 5 different kinds of leaves.
- 2.) Back inside, have students forms pairs or small groups. Ask them to examine their leaves and sort them into groups according to criteria that they determine.
- 3.) Have students share some of the ways they sorted the leaves. Ask:
  - What are some differences?
  - What do the leaves have in common?
  - Do any leaves have teeth on their edges?
  - Do any leaves have hairs?
  - What do the leaves feel like?
  - Who found the biggest leaf? The narrowest leaf? The smallest leaf?
  - Have any leaves been eaten by insects? How can they tell?
  - Can they trace the veins on their leaves with their fingers?
- 4.) Take students back to the same location as in Step 1. Have each student give one of their leaves to another student. Explain that they will find what kind of tree the leaf came from. Walk from tree to tree, and have students compare their leaves with leaves on the tree. If a student has a leaf that matches a tree, stop and look at it more closely.
  - Where on the branch do leaves grow?
  - How are the leaves attached?
  - Do the leaves grow far apart from each other, close together, or in clumps?
  - Do all leaves on the tree match exactly?
  - What color are the leaves?
  - What does the bark look like?
  - What does the bark feel like?
  - What color is the bark?

## Adopt a Tree Activities

- 1.) Draw a sketch of your tree. Draw the shape of its trunk, branches, and canopy.
- 2.) Draw a picture of a leaf from your tree. How does the leaf smell? How does it feel?
- 3.) Find out what kind of tree it is. Does it have any leaves, fruits, nuts, or seeds that help identify it?
- 4.) Where is your tree? Draw a map to show its location.
- 5.) Investigate the health of your tree. Is it alive? How can you tell? Is it healthy?
- 6.) How large is your tree? How old do you think your tree is?
- 7.) What does the bark look like? How does the bark feel? How does it smell? Is there anything growing on the bark?
- 8.) Are there any animals on or near your tree?
- 9.) Are there any signs that animals have used your tree in the past? Do you see any nests, trails, or animal signs?
- 10.) Write ten words to describe your tree.

# Adopt a Tree Certificate

Name of tree \_\_\_\_\_

Size of tree \_\_\_\_\_

Age of tree \_\_\_\_\_

Ten words to describe your tree

1.) \_\_\_\_\_ 6.) \_\_\_\_\_

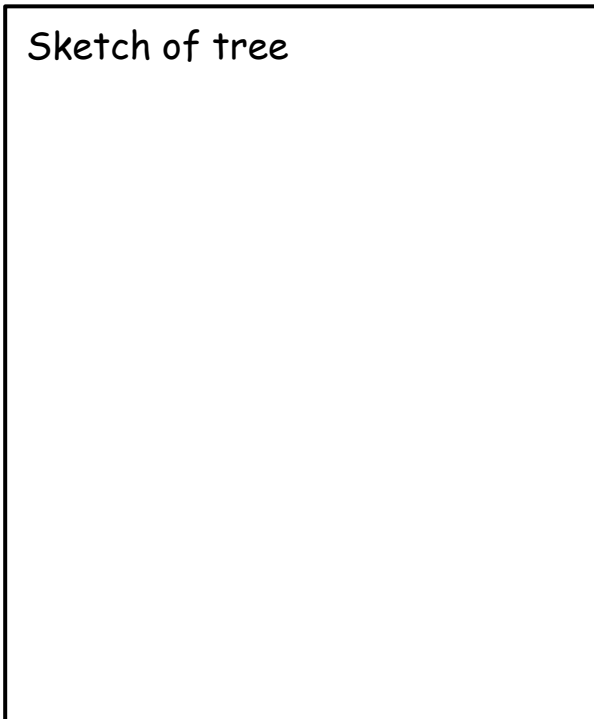
2.) \_\_\_\_\_ 7.) \_\_\_\_\_

3.) \_\_\_\_\_ 8.) \_\_\_\_\_

4.) \_\_\_\_\_ 9.) \_\_\_\_\_

5.) \_\_\_\_\_ 10.) \_\_\_\_\_

Sketch of tree



Sketch of leaf

