



Creative Connections Exploring Natural Art in the Woodland

Sustainable Woodland Art: Exploring Ecosystems Through Creativity

Objective:

Students will investigate the woodland ecosystem, explore how natural materials can be used in art, and create a meaningful piece of land art that reflects sustainability, balance, and connection with nature. This activity encourages critical thinking, artistic expression, and an understanding of ecological systems.

Age Group: KS3

Duration: 2 hours

Curriculum Links:

- **Art and Design:** Develop creativity and mastery of techniques using unconventional media; produce artwork that conveys messages and themes.
 - **Science:** Explore relationships in ecosystems, including human impacts.
 - **Geography:** Investigate physical landscapes, human interaction with environments, and sustainability.
 - **Citizenship:** Understand sustainable living and environmental responsibility.
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Materials Needed:

- Collection baskets for natural materials (twigs, leaves, stones, moss, etc.)
 - Sketchbooks or paper for planning designs
 - Biodegradable string, wool, or eco-friendly adhesive for assembly
 - Examples of artists working with natural materials, such as Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long
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Activity Plan:

1. Introduction: Art and Ecosystems (15 minutes)

- Begin with a discussion:
 - Show examples of land art and discuss how it reflects themes like sustainability and connection to the environment.
 - Explore the question: "How can we use art to raise awareness about protecting ecosystems?"
 - Introduce key ecological concepts, such as biodiversity, interdependence, and human impact on woodlands.
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2. Woodland Exploration and Material Collection (30 minutes)

- Take students on a guided exploration:
 - Task them with observing the woodland layers (canopy, understorey, and forest floor) and identifying materials that represent each layer.
 - Encourage ethical collection: Use only fallen items and avoid disturbing habitats.



- Challenge students to think about the story their art will tell about the woodland.
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3. Design and Creation (50 minutes)

- Students work in pairs or small groups to plan and create their land art:
 - Sketch their ideas, incorporating themes of sustainability, balance, or change.
 - Use natural materials to create a temporary artwork that highlights their theme.
 - Incorporate techniques such as layering, symmetry, and texture to reflect the natural environment.
 - Emphasise the principle of “leave no trace”: The art should naturally decompose or leave minimal impact.
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4. Sharing and Reflection (25 minutes)

- Students present their work to the group:
 - Describe the message behind their artwork.
 - Explain the materials used and their significance to the ecosystem.
 - Facilitate a reflective discussion:
 - “What did you learn about sustainability through this process?”
 - “How can art inspire people to care for the environment?”
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Outcomes:

- Students develop a deeper understanding of ecosystems and sustainable practices.
 - They refine artistic techniques and learn to use unconventional materials creatively.
 - They strengthen critical thinking, collaboration, and presentation skills.
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Extension Ideas:

- Create a digital photo gallery of the land art pieces to raise awareness about woodland sustainability.
- Research and debate the impact of deforestation and how sustainable practices can mitigate these effects.
- Compare the woodland ecosystem to other environments and explore how art could represent their unique challenges.

