



Nature Journaling: A Page From Thoreau's Book

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Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) grew up in Concord, Massachusetts in the early 1800's. Thoreau was a transcendentalist. Transcendentalism is the philosophy that knowledge comes through intuition and imagination, rather than just logic. He also enjoyed nature writing and keeping record of his observations in a journal he carried around with him at all times. With the help of his journal (picture to the left), Thoreau was able to connect to nature by surveying the land and understanding how plants and animals work.



What is nature journaling?

Nature journaling is recording observations of nature. Nature observations may include writing, sketching plants and animals, making tree rubbings, pressing flowers, collecting seeds from different plants, or taking photographs of a nature walk.

Step into Thoreau's shoes...

Now it's your turn! Nature journaling forces us to notice our surroundings, and when we do so, like Thoreau, we become more a part of nature and are able to understand it better.

Materials to make your nature journal:

- Blank loose-leaf paper
- Cover materials: birch bark, paper bag,

cardboard, stained construction paper (coffee/ old tea bags), etc.

- Crayons, Pencils, Eraser, Water-colors, Pastels, etc.

- Tape
- Stapler

Optional:

- Hole-puncher
- Ribbon/twine

How to make your nature journal:

1. Begin by making the cover! Get as creative as you would like with color, stickers, writing, poetry, drawing, sketches, rubbings, glitter, etc.
2. The easiest way to make a journal is to staple the cover to one edge of a small stack of loose-leaf paper. However, if you feel more adventurous, you could punch holes on the side of the loose-leaf paper and cover together, and then connect them with ribbon or twine.

Bring it all in a science pack!

A science pack is a backpack that will carry your gear during the nature walk. It could include...

- Your nature journal, of course!
- Writing utensils (crayons, pencils, pens, markers, etc.)
- A snack and water in case you get hungry and/or thirsty
- Clip board or sturdy writing surface
- Camera; you never know when you would want to take a snap shot!
- Tape
- Zip-lock baggies for specimens
- Some other fun things could include a magnifying glass, binoculars, map(s), etc.

How to start journaling:

1. Take a walk outside or go look around your backyard and look around at the plants and animals. What do you see, smell, hear, and feel? Enjoy your time outside and try to observe parts of nature one normally does not take the time to notice.
2. Depending on the weather, make sure to dress accordingly! If the weather does not permit an extensive walk, collect 'samples', take some pictures, and do the rest of your journaling in the comfort of your own home.
3. During your nature walk, try...
 - Rubbings! To make a rubbing, place the specimen under a sheet of paper in your journal, and rub a crayon (on its side) on top in order to get the 'skeleton' of the specimen on the sheet of paper.
 - Five minutes of silence during your walk. If you keep quiet for a little while, you will be able to hear different noises you wouldn't have heard otherwise. You will also be able to focus better on your observations.
4. Do some pre/post-journaling research online and at your local library. Become an expert on the plants and animals you have observed or want to observe during your nature walks.



You did it! Share your Nature Journal with your family, friends, teacher, or class.

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