



WHO'S THERE?

TIME: Varies with activity

OBJECTIVE: To develop sensory awareness of nature.

MATERIALS: Environmental sound tapes and tape player

BACKGROUND:

The ability to be aware of our surroundings is often a learned behavior, and our innate inclination to appreciate sensory impressions created by nature is often sublimated by human-produced sights, sounds, and smells. However, a heightened sensory awareness of the natural world can be fostered and can lead to an increased ability to observe the environment. This is an important first step in developing scientific ability and in becoming a natural scientist since scientists must be able to observe what is occurring in their environment.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY:

Either tape environmental sounds or acquire a commercial tape of nature's sounds.

Before students enter the classroom, arrange objects such as flowers, mosses, or branches around the room. Objects could be camouflaged by putting red flowers near red books or mosses in front of similarly colored objects.

Give students an opportunity to look around the room.

LEAD-IN:

Without looking around, who can describe...(name an area of the room with some camouflaged items).

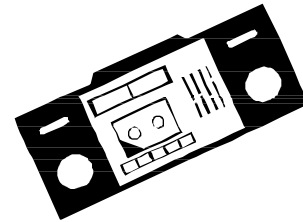
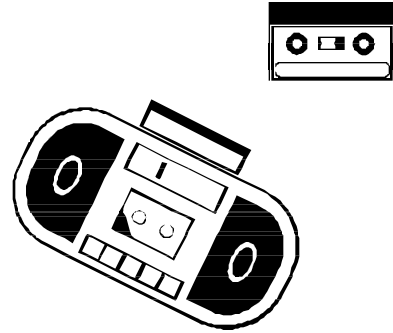
Now, close your eyes and listen for a minute. (Play the environmental sounds tape.) What did you hear? Do you think you heard more because your eyes were closed? Why?

What are you discovering from this?

Do we see and hear all that is around us?

What about our sense of smell? Can you tell what's for dinner by the odors from the kitchen? What other odors do you notice and identify?

We're going to spend some time sharpening our observation skills and becoming more aware of what nature is telling our senses. When we do this, we will be a little more like the animals who depend upon their senses for survival.



ACTIVITY:

1. Ask students to get comfortable and play the sounds tape for five minutes; part of the time students should have their eyes closed and then opened.
2. Sit in silence for a minute.
3. Discuss the difference in what was heard while eyes were closed and while they were opened. What does this tell us about human sensory awareness as compared to an animal's sensory awareness?
4. Take students outside for a walk. Instruct them to walk slowly, single file, without talking. Tell them to try to concentrate on one sense at a time.
5. The class could be divided into groups with each group assigned one sense on which to concentrate.
6. Have students report on their experience and discuss how individual perspectives differ.

BRANCHING OUT:

1. Have students prepare instructions to teach people to "look" as they walk.
2. Under supervision, have students walk a "blind-fold" trail through a park or nature area. (Stretch a rope from tree to tree and have blindfolded students slowly follow the rope.) After a walk, have students describe what they felt, heard, or smelled. What could they identify?

