

NOTICE LIKE A NATURALIST

These activities, adapted from BEETLES, develop observation, questioning, and connecting skills that prepare the learner to make their own discoveries about the natural world.



A KEEN OBSERVER

If you're having trouble getting started with observations, brainstorm qualities of a keen observer with your learner. Encourage them to use multiple senses, go beyond the obvious, and be patient.

I NOTICE...

You can't notice the wrong thing! Consider size, shape, texture, weight, and all your senses (except maybe taste!). If you feel you've run out of observations, try looking from another perspective. Do you notice anything new?

MULTIPLE LEARNERS

A group of learners can observe the same object or different ones, either maximizing observations or allowing each learner to be the expert on their own object.

OBSERVE - QUESTION - CONNECT

- One of the best ways to get to know the world around us is to become a keen observer. Have your learner find an interesting natural object, familiar or unfamiliar. Explain that you are going to observe this object together.
- Write the phrase "I notice..." on a piece of paper or dry erase board. Take one minute for you and your learner to each to list as many observations as possible, either writing them down or saying them aloud (it's okay to feel a little silly talking to yourself). After one minute, share some observations with each other. The questions below might help.
 - Did you notice any of the same things? Did you notice anything different?
 - How would you describe this object to someone who had never seen it before?
 - Did anything you noticed surprise you?
 - How did it feel to focus on making these observations?
- Questions can encourage deeper observation. Write the phrase "I wonder..." as a sentence starter and take one minute with your learner to each list as many questions about your object as you can. At the end of the time, choose a couple of favorite questions to share with each other.
- Connections help us remember our ideas and come up with new ones. Write the sentence starter "It reminds me of..." and take one minute for you and your learner to each draw connections between your object and familiar things and ideas. After one minute, share a few of your connections with each other.

Observe

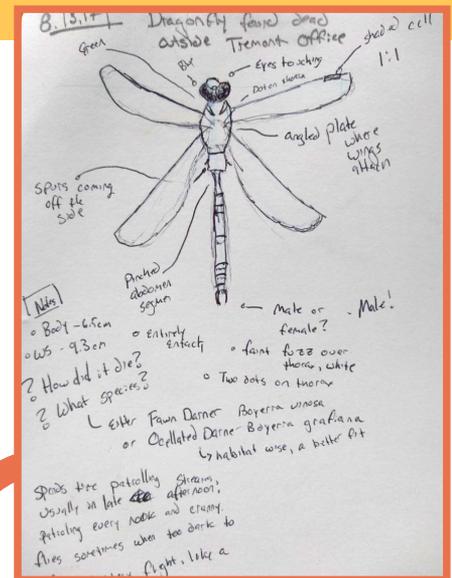
Question

Connect

NATURALIST SKETCH

- Find a piece of paper or notebook, a pencil, and an interesting natural object. Explain to your learner that you are each going to make some observations through a nature sketch. Emphasize that the goal isn't to make a perfect picture, but instead to observe in a new way. Try using words and numbers to add details to the sketch.
- Take 10-15 minutes to each sketch your object in as much detail as possible. Encourage your learner to continue working even if they feel they are "done" early. At the end of the time, share your sketches with each other.

- Is there anything you noticed after sketching?
- What's your favorite part of your sketch?
- How did making the sketch make you feel? Did anything surprise you?
- What was difficult to represent on paper? How did you represent it?



NOW WHAT DO I DO?

Now that you know how to observe like a naturalist, it's time to do something with your skills! Write a poem about what you noticed, design an investigation around one of your questions, or try another activity from the Explore section.

Whatever you create, share it with us by tagging us on Facebook (@GSMITremont) or Instagram (@tremontinstitute)!

Make it a journal page! Record your observations, questions, and connections alongside your sketch. Don't forget important details like the time, location, and weather!