

Using A Tree Field Guide to Identify Trees

Note: Feel free to tailor this to your literacy needs. Ex. Finding letter patterns (ou, ch, ie, and so on) in words, or adjust the data sheet.

Goal: Develop increased familiarity/understanding of using non-fiction texts to find information.

Objectives:

Knowledge: Students locate and interpret information in a table of contents/index/glossary to answer questions.

Skills: Use reading skills to answer several characteristics questions about a tree. Work collaboratively in teams. Develop research skills. Students use the table of contents and/or index to find a given tree, read about, and answer questions on the student data sheet about the tree.

Values: Students recognize the importance of using non-fiction texts (field guides) to learn information about natural resources.

Virginia SOL: Science (2018) 3.1

English 3.1, 3.4 b & f, 3.5, 3.6 e & f, 3.7b (Fiction and non-fiction pairing. Teachers read *A Tree Named Steve* and *Be a Friend to Trees* in another station at school visit.)

Materials

- Virginia Department of Forestry [Common Native Trees of Virginia](#) books.
- 20-25 paper slips with tree names (see page 3)
- Student data sheets (one per student)

Instructional Strategy:

1. **Introductory Inquiry:** What is the difference between nonfiction and fiction books? What are some uses of non-fiction books?
2. **Inquire:** What are some text features of a non-fiction book? Write a list based of student responses on the board. (You may desire to distribute the *Native Trees of Virginia* books now to help generate responses.)
***See list of various non-fiction text features on page 2.**
3. Just as we have been learning about trees at Blandy and in our schoolyard, we can use the *Common Native Trees of Virginia* guides to explore information about some of the trees of Virginia. Books can take us places even if we don't have the means to travel.
4. Distribute to each student: data sheet, a book, and a slip of paper with a tree name on it. Pair up students for this activity.
5. Model with students how to complete the data sheet, find information (i.e. scanning), and summarize the information. We recommend having the pairs take turns as researcher and recorder. The researcher looks up the information and reads it, while the recorder inserts it into the datasheet.
6. Instruct students to use the table of contents or index to find the entry for their tree. They will then read the entry and record information on the data sheet. In student pairs, they can read the entry to each other.
7. After they have recorded information about their tree, tell them to look for a confusing word or a word they do not know.
8. If time permits, share out what they have learned with the rest of the class.
9. **Extension:** Are there any words that you see in your entry that have multiple meanings?

Possible Extensions: (optional)

Put confusing/new words on the board to define.



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Text Features List

- * **Labels** help the reader understand the small parts of a picture.
- * **Photographs** help the reader see what the real topic looks like.
- * **Captions** help the reader understand what they are looking at in a picture.
- * **Comparisons** help the reader compare the item to something they are already familiar with.
- * **Cross Sections** help the reader see what something looks like from the inside.
- * **Maps** help the reader know where something is located in the world.
- * **Types of Print** help the reader know that the word or words are important.
- * **Close-Ups** help the reader see what something looks like from up close.
- * **Tables of Contents** help the reader know how the book is organized.
- * **Indexes** help the reader find specific information in a book.
- * **Glossaries** help the reader understand the definitions of important words in the book



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Below are trees we recommend for this activity. Print, cut out, and distribute to students. **Names in red are challenging trees.**

Eastern white pine	Water Oak
Shortleaf pine	Northern Red Oak
Pitch pine	Willow oak
Virginia Pine	Slippery Elm
Northern white cedar	Paw paw
Red spruce	Black cherry
Hemlock	Persimmon
Yellow birch	Black gum
American hornbeam	Flowering Dogwood
Alleghany chinquapin	American Holly
Chestnut Oak	Eastern Redbud
	Cucumber tree
Black walnut	American chestnut
Shagbark hickory	Bald cypress



Native Trees of Virginia

Student Name _____

Tree Name	Information
Find your tree's name in the table of contents. On what page did you find it?	
What is the mature/adult size of the tree?	
What is the tree's habitat?	
Describe the Needles or the Leaves.	
Summarize- what do the cones or the fruit look like?	
Interesting fact to share.	
Did you find any confusing word or a word you don't know the meaning of?	

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