

LESSON PLAN: Tree Identification with *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*

In *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*, Cricket finds her father's book about living off the land. In the book, he made notes about when he would teach Cricket certain skills. When Cricket was 10, he taught her how to identify trees. Students can use the book as a starting point for learning how to identify trees in their area.

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to recognize the differences between coniferous and deciduous trees.
- Students will be able to identify trees that have needles and trees that have leaves.
- Students will be able to recognize the differences between scale-like needles, awl-shaped needles, pine needles, and leaves.
- Students will be able to identify the differences between compound leaves and simple leaves.
- Students will be able to identify the differences between opposite arrangement and alternate arrangement of leaves.
- Students will be able to use *What Tree is That? Online* to identify trees.

Supplies

- Computer and Projector for class discussion
- Computers for Student Use
- *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*
- Leaf Example Handout – Use this image:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52651/52651-h/images/img004b.jpg> (This image is free to use and print from *Forest Trees of Texas*, Texas Forestry Service,
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/52651/52651-h/52651-h.htm>)

Introduction

In *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*, Cricket is able to identify many of the trees in the woods. In this lesson, students will learn to use the online tool *What Tree Is That? Online* to aid in tree identification.

1. On page 132 of *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*, Cricket states about the Bird Room: *Each wall looked like it was painted in a different season from Miss V.'s garden—winter, spring, summer, fall. You could tell by the trees.* As a class, discuss

what Cricket means. Have the students read the descriptions of the walls on pages 148-149 to see if they were right.

2. Explain that coniferous trees retain their needles (or leaves) all year, but deciduous trees drop their leaves in the fall.
3. Provide each student with the Leaf Example Handout. As a class, discuss the differences between leaves, pine needles, awl-shaped needles, and scale-like needles.
4. Using the Leaf Example Handout as a reference, discuss the difference between a simple leaf and a compound leaf.
5. Using the Leaf Example Handout as a reference, discuss the difference between an alternate compound leaves and an opposite compound leaves.

Main Lesson

1. Provide each student with a plastic baggie.
2. Take the class outside to an area with trees. Instruct the students to pick one leaf from each tree and put it in their baggie. Collect the leaves with the students.
3. Return to the classroom. Choose a leaf, and instruct the students to find the same type of leaf in their collections.
4. Use the computer and projector to present the website *What Tree Is That? Online*. As a class, try to identify the leaf. (<https://www.arborday.org/TREES/whattree/>)
5. Choose another leaf and practice again as a class.

Independent Practice

1. Instruct the students to use their personal computers to finish identifying the rest of the leaves they found. (If individual computers are not available, continue the activity as a class.)
2. Have the students record their findings on a blank sheet of paper (such as copy paper). For each leaf, they should include a drawing of the leaf and the name of the tree.

Extensions

- Have the students bring in leaves from their own yard or neighborhood to identify.
- Research the types of trees that are found in your area. Create a leaf identification poster featuring these trees.
- Choose a favorite tree that grows in your area and plant one at the school or at home.

- Create a bar graph showing the number of the different types of trees that grow around your school or neighborhood.
- There are many different trees mentioned in *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*. Research these trees and draw a picture of a leaf for each one. The trees include: tea olive, hickory, pine, ginkgo, sugar maple, pin oak, wild orange, dogwood

Assessment

Student will record their findings regarding the leaves and tree names.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-8.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-8.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-8.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-8.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4