

Discovery bag

The story

It is nearly the end of the long summer holidays. Cosmic and Gem are bored. “I’m so fed up!” sighs Cosmic. “I’ve played all my games and read all my books and there’s nothing else to do.”

“Me too,” replies Gem. “I wonder if Uncle Astro has any jobs we could do for him? Let’s ask.”

“I’m afraid all my jobs are done,” says Uncle Astro. “How about I make you a discovery bag? That should keep you busy for a while.”

“Yes please!” cry Cosmic and Gem. The children love Uncle Astro’s mysterious ‘discovery bags’. Each one is filled with a collection of interesting things to investigate and explore. Getting a ‘discovery bag’ is certainly a special treat!

A short time later Uncle Astro puts a large bag on the table in front of the children. Just then Aunt Stella walks in, “Oooo a discovery bag, what fun!” she exclaims. “I wonder what’s inside?”

“You’re just in time to see us open it and find out,” replies Gem. “We’ll open it on the count of three. One, two, three.....”

What do I do?

1. Follow the instructions on the ACTIVITY CARD. Make sure you give the children time to talk where this symbol shows. ►
2. **Do not give out the ACTIVITY CARD yet.** Read the story, then hand out the bags. Let the children open their bags and explore the contents.
3. Now hand out the ACTIVITY CARD. Get the children to talk to a buddy about the questions and the ideas in the Concept Cartoon.
4. Talk about how each different type of tree has unique leaves, fruits and bark and how to use the magnifying glass to make close observations. Discuss sorting, grouping and matching the tree parts.
5. Discuss safety issues. See Safety notes for more details.
6. Let them talk together about what they have found out. How many trees do the parts come from? Have they seen any of these trees? Was there anything else in the bag?
7. Encourage children to make detailed drawings of some of the tree parts to show similarities and differences.
8. There are follow up activities for children who have finished or who want to do more finding out at home and earn a bonus sticker.



★ Handy hints

Things to look out for

- ★ Adding items other than tree parts to the bags will help to create more challenge and discussion. These could be parts of other plants such as flowers, vegetables and fruit, or things made from wood, or anything else that takes your fancy!
- ★ Children could use a simple tree guide to help them to identify what they have (see background information for website). Let them investigate as much as possible without your support.
- ★ It helps if children can go outside to try to match the parts to real trees. Alternatively, encourage them to look closely at trees they might see on their way home or at the local park.

Background information

- ★ The aim of this activity is to get children interested in trees, and the life that trees support, and begin to be aware of the differences between trees.
- ★ This activity relates to one of the OPAL environmental surveys. You could talk to children about ways to get involved either through school or home. To find out more visit www.britishtreesociety.org/creststar or www.opalexplornature.org/crest

Safety

- ★ Some plant parts can be poisonous, toxic (e.g. Laburnum seeds) or have sap that can irritate the skin. Check that your tree parts are safe to use. Remind children not to eat anything and to wash their hands afterwards.

Resources

- ★ Large cloth or paper bag containing:
 - ★ Parts from a selection of a minimum of two trees e.g. twigs with leaves on, bare twigs, bark, fruits, cones or things such as galls, if you can find them.
 - ★ Other interesting items (see Things to look out for).

Include enough material to fill the bag. It doesn't matter if parts of the same tree are repeated.

Also have available for when required:

- ★ Pencils, crayons, paper and glue
- ★ Magnifying glasses
- ★ Photographs of trees and/or tree guides (see background information for website)

How can children share their ideas?

- ★ Draw a picture of one of the trees or parts of the trees.
- ★ Create a collage using the different tree parts.
- ★ Take bark or leaf rubbings.

