

Leaves in the Wind

Objectives:

- To develop the senses by making a variety of comparisons.
- To explore the character of a tree by assuming a variety of poses.
- To explore with modeling clay and to create a visual representation.
- To define *potter* as *a person who makes bowls and plates out of clay*.

Advance Preparation:

- Post pictures for display.
- Prepare modeling clay, working it to a softened consistency.
- Distribute construction paper and clay.

Method:

STEP 1: Comparing trees

Refer to the **pictures of trees** on the display board. Choose two different types of trees like an oak tree and a pine tree, and **discuss the differences, visually**. Compare characteristics such as: the shapes of the leaves, the sizes of the leaves, and the colors of the leaves. Have the children relate the **shape of each tree** to either a **square, circle or triangle**. To do so, it might help if they were to squint their eyes and do a tracing in the air around the shape with a finger. Do pine trees form triangles?

Materials:

- CHOOSE ART STUDENT BOOKLET **page 7**
- a few pine (or other evergreen) needles and several oak (or other shade tree) leaves
- a collection of pictures for display: evergreen tree, shade tree such as oak or maple, wild flowers, birds, dogs, horses, cars, trucks (items that might be found in an outdoor scene)

One / student of each of the following:

- tennis ball-sized clump of modeling clay such as plasticene
- 12" x 18" colored construction paper

Scripture Talk:

“ . . . we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”

Isaiah 64: 8

Just as a potter makes things from clay, so God made us all.

Distribute a few pine needles and a few oak leaves, allowing the children to feel them and smell them. How do they compare?

STEP 2: Posing as trees

Read student booklet **page 7** with the children. Then tell them that they are going to play a posing game. Have the children stand and prepare to assume the pose of a tree. Ask them to **create the shape of a pine tree** by adjusting their arms and legs to assume the shape of a triangle. Then examine the poses, and ask them how they would change the pose to become an **oak tree**. Ask them to show you an oak tree swaying in the wind. Vary the strength of the breeze - a light breeze, a strong wind, a wind storm. Does the wind cause the leaves to flutter while the branches remain still? Does the wind affect both the leaves and the branches? Does the whole tree sway? Vary the direction of the wind. Acting as the source of the wind, change positions so that the children bow and sway in different directions as you move about the room.

Next, instead of posing as a whole oak tree, have the children **pose as oak leaves and then as pine needles**. Challenge them to show you how an oak leaf might look fluttering in a breeze. The children may need to be reminded that not only should their arms be involved, but that their whole body represents the leaf. What if the leaf were to fall from the tree and blow across the ground? Who can act that out? How would the pose for a pine needle look? Does it look like the pose used in a previous lesson for a straight line? How would a pine needle move if it were blown down the sidewalk?

Have the children return to their seats, and place an oak leaf and several pine needles on the table. For all the children to see, blow on the oak leaf and watch its movement across the table. (Try to make the leaf lift and flutter as you blow.) Then blow on the pine needles. How is their movement different? If desired, have the children **return to their acting positions and repeat the actions** of the two kinds of leaves blowing across the sidewalk. Would the oak leaf tend to flutter, lift and drop as the wind catches it? Does the pine needle just roll or scoot?

STEP 3: Modeling clay quick pics

Before distributing the modeling clay, refer to *Scripture Talk*, telling the children that the Bible talks about a potter and clay. Define *potter* as *a person who makes bowls, cups and plates out of clay*.

Give each child a lump of **modeling clay** (such as plasticene). Allow the children to explore the clay undisturbed for a few minutes. Then teach them some basic modeling techniques like **rolling a ball** and then **rolling a long, thin straight line** (or coil). To do so, begin by having them pinch off a small chunk of clay, about the size of a large marble. Then, ask them to hold the ball between their palms and roll it into a ball with their hands. Next, ask them to try rolling a long, thin line. How will they do that? Have the children contribute by sharing the methods they discover. Does it work best to roll it on the table or in their hands? What can they make with a long, thin line? Next, ask how they would flatten their clay if they didn't want a round ball or a coil, but preferred to have a large, flat

surface. What happens if they make a ball and then press it flat? What shape do they get?

Next, initiate a **modeling game** - the goal is to quickly make an object, take it apart, then quickly make another object, and then take it apart, as well. Tell them you will give them only about **30 seconds** to each object. Count the 30 seconds for them. Have the children make the following objects and squeeze them into a ball after each modeling exercise:

- **A leaf.** It can be any kind of a leaf. At the end of the 30 seconds, have the children evaluate their work by having a few describe the shape of the leaf.
- **A pine needle.** The children can practice rolling a long, thin coil.

Suggest that the children model the following objects flat on the table rather than as 3-dimensional objects.

- **A whole pine tree.** Remind the students to think about the shape of a pine tree and to make the shape of the whole tree, not the shapes of the needles. If they need help, encourage them to flatten the clay and shape it into a triangle, adding a trunk at the bottom.
- **An oak tree.** Remind the children to think about the shape of the oak tree, itself. Can they put a flat circle together with a short trunk?
- **A big flower.** If the children are struggling with the construction of a flower, suggest they make five flattened circles and a small circle

for the center, arranging the petals around the center and rolling a long, thin line for the stem. *They may need extra time for this one.*

- **A bird.** Refer to the picture display and help the children to see the basic shapes: a circle for the head, and a triangle for the body. Then let the children model the shape as they choose.

This exercise includes quick modeling rather than slow, methodical modeling for a specific reason. Children gain experience and knowledge by working and experimenting with materials. Hesitation or timidity that might result from a fear of failure or a desire to do things “right” can inhibit this experience; therefore, when exploring and experimenting is the goal, a timid approach can jeopardize learning. “Quick modeling,” which also includes many fresh starts, can be a relief to the hesitant child, since the thought of making something “permanent” is just too intimidating and can contribute to the need to do it “just right.” Therefore, several attempts at making and taking apart not only provide great learning opportunities, but also free the child of inhibitions that threaten the exploration process. Almost before they know it, the children are engaged in learning, gaining confidence as they go. After this ice-breaking period, they will be better able to experiment unguided.

STEP 4: Modeling clay composition

If appropriate, allow the children another opportunity to freely explore the medium before beginning the next activity. Then ask them to make a **modeling clay picture**. They will do

this by flattening and shaping the clay into objects and combining them to form a simple composition on the **12" x 18" piece of construction paper** provided.

Suggest that the picture could be about the outdoors: climbing trees or playing in the trees on a windy day. Help them to imagine some possible scenes before beginning. How many trees are there? Will there be birds in the sky? Are there clouds, or is the sun shining. Who is in the picture? Are there people, a dog, a cat? What about a car or a truck? Take time to have the children contribute suggestions, and be flexible: allow them a lot of scope in their interpretation of the theme. The purpose of suggesting a theme is simply to motivate the creative process. **Some children may have a theme of their own** that they are just bursting to explore. **Refer to the pictures on the display board** that can be used as a reference while creating.

Try to provide ample time to create during this exercise. If the children cannot keep the clay, then tell them that you will be collecting it at the end of class. Telling them that in advance will protect them from disappointment when they cannot keep their creations.