

## ACTIVITY 8

# GRANDMA'S WALK

In Chapter 8 of Wisconsin Forest Tales, students read about a class that creates a nature trail. In this activity, students work together to make an interpretive trail that tells the story of the history of Wisconsin's forests.

## BACKGROUND

### What is Interpretation?

*"Thousands of naturalists, historians, archeologists and other specialists are engaged in the work of revealing .... something of the beauty and wonder, the inspiration and spiritual meaning that lie behind what the visitor can with his senses perceive. This function of the custodians of our treasures is called Interpretation."* ~Freeman Tilden

In this lesson, your students will develop an interpretive trail describing the history of

Wisconsin's forests and lead another group of students through their trail. Beyond simply communicating facts, your students will be challenged to interpret historical information for their audience. To do this, they will need to find ways to connect with their audience on a personal level.

In Interpreting Our Heritage, Freeman Tilden defined interpretation as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."

In six principles, Tilden captures the essence of Interpretation.

1. Interpretation needs to relate what is being described to something within the personality or experience of the audience.
2. Though interpretation includes information, interpretation goes further. It is revelation based upon information.
3. Interpretation is an art which combines many arts and is in some way teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed at children needs to be designed specifically for children.

While teaching this lesson, your most important job will be to offer guidance to your students as

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- List several important events in the history of Wisconsin's forests.

### TIME

Introduction.....10 minutes  
Activity.....90 minutes  
Conclusion.....15 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Transparency and overhead projector or Chalk/Marker board
- Posterboard or cardboard for making signs
- Markers or paints
- Writing paper and pencils
- Assorted props

### SUBJECT AREAS ADDRESSED

Language Arts  
Social Studies

they use their creativity to make meaningful connections between their audience and the history of Wisconsin's forests.



## INTRODUCTION

Now that your students have completed the book Wisconsin Forest Tales, take some time to review each chapter with your class. Ask questions to jog their memories about what they have read. Here are some examples: In "Saenomehsaeh Finds a Way," why did the Menominee people burn the forest? (*The Menominee used fire to clear the forest and make room for grass and shrubs to grow. They needed to do this to attract more deer for hunting.*) How did John McDonald save Boss Larson's life in "Roll Out or Roll Up"? (*He alerted the crew when he noticed logs slipping on the load. He even pushed Boss Larson out of harm's way.*) How did Susanna help Papa make it safely through the smoke in "Calling Papa Home"? (*She climbed to the top of their roof and rang the bell using her father's logger's mark.*) In "Dreaming of Wisconsin" what led the Meyer family to move from Chicago, Illinois to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin? (*The Meyers, like many families, believed false advertising that claimed wheat grew taller than a man in Wisconsin.*) Looking back at "Writing Home," what kinds of jobs did CCC men do to help Wisconsin? (*They planted trees, prevented soil erosion, fought fires and built bridges.*) Why were the stolen trees so important to Paul and his family in "Timber-r-r Thieves"? (*They were important because they were very valuable. Paul's family had planned on selling the trees to pay for Paul's college education.*) In "Elm Street Tree House Club" what benefits were lost when Dutch elm disease killed street trees? (*Trees help by preventing soil erosion, cleaning the air, providing homes for animals, providing shade and beauty, and providing places for tree houses.*)



## ACTIVITY

1) Remind your students that in Chapter 8 of Wisconsin Forest Tales, Molly's class worked together to create a nature trail in their school forest. Tell your students that they are going to work together to create a special trail as well. This time instead of creating a trail that tells about the animals and plants in a particular area, your students will create a trail that tells the story of Wisconsin's forests throughout history. Wisconsin Forest Tales will be the starting point for your students' creativity. Tell your students that the theme of their interpretive trail will be: **Many different people and events helped Wisconsin's forests become what they are today.**

2) Remind your students of the character named Sydney from Chapter 8. Ask your students what her main role was in helping her class create their nature trail. (*Sydney helped everyone get organized.*) Tell your students that in order to be successful at creating their interpretive trail, they will need to stay organized. Write the theme on the chalkboard or project it on the overhead. Next make a heading for each of the previous seven chapters. Divide your students into seven groups and assign a chapter to each group. Make a note of those assignments on the board or overhead. Then go over the "To Do List" so your students understand what they must accomplish with their group.

3) Give your students time to look back through their assigned chapter for ideas of objects that could be collected and put on display. They should brainstorm within their group for ideas. Have each group come up with one or two objects that can be easily collected to represent their chapter. You may need to assign the collection of objects as homework, so that students can look for objects at home. Here are some ideas to suggest if your students get stuck:

- Chapter 1: Maple or aspen leaves, grass, water, sand
- Chapter 2: Pine boughs, hay, log, wool socks
- Chapter 3: Blanket, bell
- Chapter 4: Potatoes, rocks
- Chapter 5: Trowel, seedling, rocks, books
- Chapter 6: Walnuts, black walnut leaf, mud, rock, belt buckle

Chapter 7: Elm leaf, scrap of two-by-four, tape measure, yellow leaves, dead branch, seedling

4) Once the groups have decided on their objects, give them time to figure out how they are going to use those objects to interpret their part of Wisconsin's history. Students may choose to become a character from the book, use an expressive voice to retell the story from the chapter in their own words, or use some other creative means like a skit, a song, a poem, etc. Encourage your students to involve the senses of their audience and to allow their audience to touch the objects. Remind your students to consider asking thought-provoking questions or dressing up on the day of the presentation.

5) As the teacher, you may give the introduction to the interpretive trail, or allow a student or group of students to do it. The introduction, however, should catch the attention of the audience. This can be accomplished through something humorous, a rhetorical question, a quotation, or other creative means. The introduction should also introduce the theme of the program and set the audience's expectations. You also need to develop a conclusion to bring closure to the experience for the audience. Maybe it is a review of the seven stations visited, another quote, or a question to ponder.

6) Once the students have chosen objects and discussed how to use those objects to tell a story, have your students create signs explaining how the objects fit into the history of Wisconsin's forests. When this is complete, help your students set up the interpretive trail in your classroom or possibly somewhere outside on the school grounds. Put the items in the order of the chapters in the book so your students are also telling the history of forests in Wisconsin. Before you invite another class to see your trail, have your students practice leading their part of the trail for their classmates. After the introduction, start with the group who worked on Chapter 1. Continue to allow each group to practice until everyone feels comfortable and there is a flow to the entire presentation.

7) Finally, work as a group to brainstorm a name for your trail. You could also draw a map of your trail and ask each group to label their station

on the map. Once all of your preparations are complete, invite another class to go through your interpretive trail.



## CONCLUSION

Now that your students have created an interpretive trail and led another group of students through it, it is time to reflect. In Chapter 8, Molly made entries in her diary expressing her feelings about the events of the day. Now it is your students' turn. Ask each of your students to write a diary entry expressing their feelings about their class project. Write the following questions on the board to get them thinking: Looking back at the history of forests in Wisconsin, how do you feel about how our ancestors treated forests? What was your favorite part of putting the interpretive trail together? You have learned that people's actions have an affect on our forest ecosystem. What are some changes you want to make in your life to help Wisconsin maintain healthy forests for future generations?



## ASSESSMENT

Have each student make a timeline showing the history of Wisconsin's forests from before European settlement until today. Each timeline should have at least eight points. Ask your students to show as much detail as possible.

**Place on an overhead projector or chalk/marker board.**

## **THEME FOR INTERPRETIVE TRAIL:**

Many different people and events have helped shape Wisconsin's forests and brought them to their present state.

### **Chapter 1: Saenomehsaeh Finds a Way**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 2: Roll Out or Roll Up**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 3: Calling Papa Home**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 4: Dreaming of Wisconsin**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 5: Writing Home**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 6: Timber-r-r Thieves**

Team Members:

### **Chapter 7: The Elm Street Tree House Club**

Team Members:

### **To Do List:**

1. Review your chapter. Brainstorm objects you could collect to represent the period of time described in your chapter.
2. Narrow your list of ideas down to one or two objects.
3. Find a creative way to interpret your period of history for an audience. Use your collected objects in your presentation.
4. Create a sign explaining how your objects fit into the history of Wisconsin's forests.
5. Work with the entire class to set up an interpretive trail.
6. Practice leading your station for your classmates.
7. As a class, brainstorm a name for your trail and create a trail map.
8. Invite another class to see your trail presentation.