



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™
ACTIVITY
EXPLORING ANIMALS IN TREES



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Overview

Has your child ever gazed at a tree and watched its leaves blow in the breeze or birds flying in and out of it? What about squirrels running up and down the trunk? You can help your child learn about trees, and the animals that use them, by exploring the trees in your backyard or neighborhood, and doing some leaf and bark rubbings together.



The Science Idea

Trees are plants that have characteristics and needs in common with all living things. They also provide a habitat for other plants and animals, and some of these animals have physical characteristics adapted for helping them move in and around the tree.

Skills: Collecting and recording data; identifying patterns and relationships; developing ideas
Age: 3–6 year olds

What to Do

- [Exploring Trees](#)
- [Making Leaf and Bark Rubbings](#)
- [Take It Further](#)

Getting Ready

When you are out and about with your child, draw her attention to trees you see. Depending on where you live and the time of year, you may spend a few minutes together enjoying the shade from a tree, looking at some brightly colored foliage, or collecting some interesting pods and nuts. Encourage her to notice any small creatures or other animals she sees in or around the trees.

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Exploring Trees

What You Need:

- [My Tree Observation](#) (below)
 - Trees
 - Pad of paper and pencil
 - Magnifying glass (optional)
 - Crayons or colored pencils for drawing; marker for writing
1. Choose a couple of trees in your backyard or neighborhood to explore with your child. Invite her to be an animal detective, and encourage her to look and listen for insects, birds, squirrels, or other animals that live in the trees or visit them. Take a pad of paper and pencil with you, and make sketches or notes of interesting things you see or jot down ideas that come up. If possible, take a magnifying glass along.
 2. Encourage your child to stand back and notice the size, shape, and color of a tree from a distance. How can she imitate the shape of the whole tree by using her body? What about just one of the branches?
 3. As she gets closer to the tree, encourage her to look more closely at its parts—leaves, fallen twigs, or branches—and any nuts, seeds, or pods on the tree. Collect some to look at more closely. Encourage her to notice the colors, shapes, and sizes of the different parts by asking questions like “What words might you use to describe this?” and “What is special about that part?”
 4. Encourage her to look for evidence of insects, caterpillars, or other small animals on the leaves and tree parts. Then help her look for birds’ nests or squirrels’ nests in the tree. Encourage her to listen for birds calling in the tree. Invite her to think about how these animals use the tree by asking questions like “Why do you think the squirrel/caterpillar/bird likes to be in the tree?” Jot down any interesting things she sees that may be evidence of animal visitors.
 5. If she observes some small creatures or other animals in and around the tree, encourage her to watch how the animal is moving through the tree. For example, is it climbing on the trunk using its claws or is it flying from branch to branch using its wings? Invite her to use her body to imitate how the animal moves. Ask “What parts of your body do you need to use to get around in the tree?” If it’s a small creature, invite your child to look at it more closely with the magnifier.

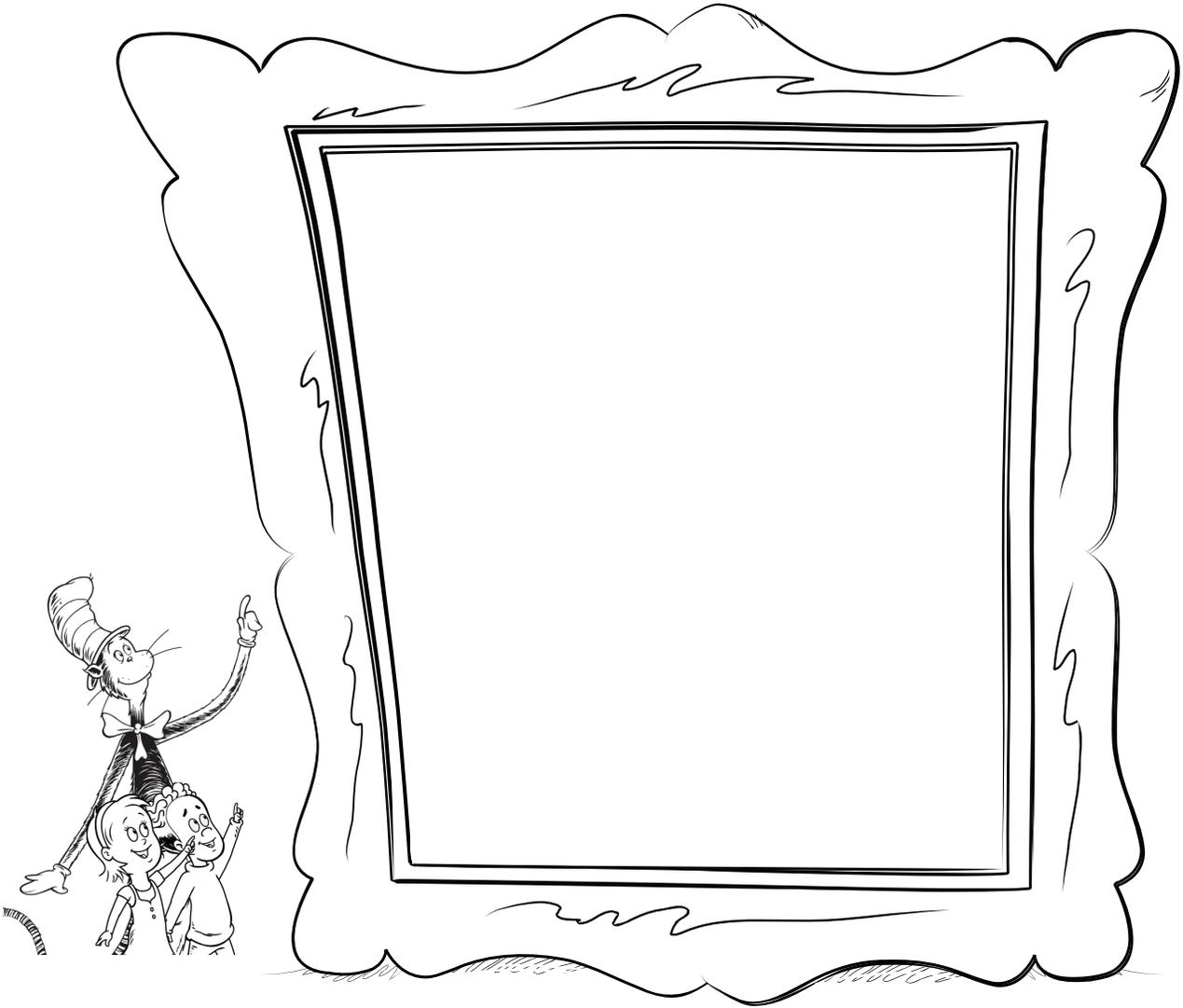
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My Tree Observation

Here's a tree that I saw!



Provide drawing materials and invite your child to draw the tree she observed and any insects, birds, or other animals she might have seen moving in, on, or around the tree. Write down her descriptions of the tree and any animals she observed. Encourage her to show you how the animals move by, for example, crawling, hopping, jumping, or flying.

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Recording Tree Observations:

Using [My Tree Observation](#), invite your child to draw the tree and any animals she might have seen moving in or near the tree. Write down her descriptions of the tree and animals she observed.

Making Leaf and Bark Rubbings

What You Need:

- Trees
 - Plain white paper and crayons with paper torn off
 - Masking tape (optional)
 - Cardboard or clipboard
 - Paper bag for collecting leaves
1. Take some paper, masking tape (optional), and crayons outside. Look for several trees with different types of bark and leaves.
 2. Encourage your child to close her eyes and feel the bark of the trees. Ask “How does it feel?” and “Which one is the smoothest? the roughest?” Encourage her to think about what it would feel like to be a small creature climbing or crawling on the bark. Ask “How would you hold on?” and “Do you think it would be harder to walk up the trunk or to walk on a branch? Why do you think so?”
 3. Use tape to hold a piece of paper on the trunk at your child’s eye level, or hold the paper for her. Encourage her to rub a crayon horizontally over the surface of the paper on the bark, just hard enough so that the bark’s texture shows on the paper. Encourage her to do several trees and compare the rubbings. “How can you tell which rubbing belongs to which tree?”
 4. Help your child collect some leaves from different trees. Encourage her to feel the tops and undersides of the leaves with her eyes closed. How can she describe the textures? Make leaf rubbings by putting the leaf on a piece of cardboard or a clipboard, covering it with the paper, and rubbing the crayon over it. Encourage your child to look closely at the rubbings and notice details from the leaves. Encourage her to think about—and show you—what it would be like to be an animal walking, climbing, crawling, or landing on these different leaves.

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5. Once she has made several leaf and bark rubbings, play a matching game with them. Mix them up and see if she can both figure out which tree each leaf and bark rubbing came from. How can she tell?

Talking About Trees: Encourage your child to share her tree explorations, and her leaf and bark rubbings, with family members and friends. Invite family members to share stories with your child about trees that were special to them when they were children, or saplings they had planted that are now full-grown trees.

Take It Further

With your child, do a more extensive exploration of animals that live in and around trees. Make a list of the animals your child finds, and encourage her to describe what they are doing and how they are moving through the trees as you take her dictation. Ask questions that help her think about how the animals use the trees: “What do you think that creature was doing in the tree?” and “How do you think the tree helps that creature?”

More Information About Trees: The Arbor Day Foundation has a site for families with free, downloadable family activities: <http://www.arborday.org/explore/families/>. The site also invites families to send in photos of children imitating tree shapes or children’s drawings of trees.

More Ways to Discover and Learn Go on an Adventure!

There are many free public parks, arboretums, and tree museums that welcome family visits and provide education about trees. Go on an adventure to a local park, and call ahead to see if you can join a guided tour with other families of young children. Take along a picnic lunch if permitted and eat it under the trees. Go to a local zoo or animal habitat and spend time with your child observing animals that live in trees.

Literacy Connection

Make a book of your child’s leaf and bark rubbings. Use *Peterson First Guide to Trees* to help your child identify some of the trees she has explored; invite her to match the shapes of leaves and other tree parts you collected with their corresponding pictures in the book. Write down the tree names on her rubbings and include them in the book, along with her description of their physical characteristics (color, shape, and/or texture).

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Look in a Book

Animals That Live in Trees (Books for Young Explorers) by Jane R. McCauley. National Geographic Society, 1986.

I Can Name 50 Trees (The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library™) by Bonnie Worth. Random House, 2010.

Peterson First Guide to Trees by George A. Petrides, illustrated by Olivia Petrides and Janet Wehr. Houghton Mifflin, 1993 (or 2nd ed., 1998, edited by Roger Tory Peterson).

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss. Random House, 1971.

New Word

Habitat: The place or environment where a plant or animal normally lives or grows; the living and nonliving parts of the environment utilized by an animal for survival

Video

Watch the related video clip at PBS Parents (www.pbsparents.org/catinthehat/)

Related Game

Play the game "Such Great Heights" at PBS KIDS (www.pbskids.org/catinthehat/games/such-great-heights.html)