



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# **Grade 5: Module 2A: Unit 3: Lesson 2**

## **Learning to Observe Closely and Record Accurately: How to Create a Field Journal**



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**Learning to Observe Closely and Record Accurately:**  
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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)	
I can write informative/explanatory texts that convey ideas and information clearly. (W.5.2) I can write narrative texts about real or imagined experiences or events. (W.5.3) I can write routinely for a variety of reasons. (W.5.10)	
Supporting Learning Targets	Ongoing Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can use specific language and vocabulary to describe events precisely in my field journal.</li><li>• I can use sensory details to enhance my descriptions of experiences and events in my field journal.</li><li>• I can use formatting and pictures to add to the meaning of the text in my field journal entries.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students' field journals</li></ul>



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Agenda	Teaching Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Opening</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engaging the Writer (5 minutes)</li><li>Introducing Learning Targets (5 minutes)</li></ol></li><li><b>Work Time</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Observing and Sketching the Natural World (15 minutes)</li><li>Recording Observations about the Natural World (30 minutes)</li></ol></li><li><b>Closing and Assessment</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Debrief: Journaling Experience (5 minutes)</li></ol></li><li><b>Homework</b></li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In advance: Create a blank field journal for each student, either purchased or teacher-created. These simple notebooks contain at least 20 sheets of unlined paper. Students will turn in their field journals every week so you can review them as an ongoing assessment.</li><li>These field journals give students an opportunity to practice observing closely and writing from direct experience about the natural world, since this is not feasible for their performance task (a field journal entry based on their research about the rainforest).</li><li>This lesson involves showing students various quotes and examples of field journals from Internet sites. Preview the web links referred to throughout the material box below. Prepare technology to have all the links open for quick access during instruction.</li><li>Review: Back-to-Back/Face-to-Face and Write-Pair-Share protocols (Appendix 1).</li><li>Create a field journal alongside your students. Modeling the practice of journaling will help build students' enthusiasm. Do not worry about the artistic merit of your drawing; the goal is to model how to sketch what you see to create a record.</li><li>This lesson includes an activity in which students go outside. If this is not feasible, then gather and bring in natural objects for students to observe in the classroom (for example: a seasonally appropriate collection of leaves, nuts, and berries, or a classroom pet).</li><li>Consider also setting up a "natural environment," such as a terrarium, in the classroom for the students to observe throughout this unit.</li><li>Not all lessons in this unit afford time for in-depth vocabulary instruction and practice. Build in opportunities during other times of the day to work with academic and content-specific vocabulary.</li></ul>



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Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
legged, observe, specific, language, sensory, describe, precisely, formatting, cirrus, cumulus, floccus, perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Field Journal Note-Catcher (completed in Lesson 1)</li><li>• Informational Text Features anchor chart (from Unit 1)</li><li>• Document camera</li><li>• Chart paper</li><li>• Blank field journals (one per student)</li><li>• Timer</li></ul>



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Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Engaging the Writer (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Remind students of the field journals they looked at yesterday. Generate excitement in your students by telling them that today they get to start making their own field journals, just like Meg and other scientists do when they are out exploring the natural world.</li><li>Ask students to review their Field Journal Note-Catcher completed in the previous lesson. Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “What do scientists record in their field journals? Why?”</li></ul></li><li>Cold call volunteers to share their discussion responses with the whole class.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When possible, provide field journals found in students' L1. This can help students understand materials presented in English.</li></ul>
<p><b>B. Introducing Learning Targets (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Share all three of the learning targets with the class. Invite them to notice what they have in common by circling the phrase at the end of each one, <i>my field journal</i>. Highlight the important aspects of keeping field journals that they will be practicing by underlining each one as you mention them—<i>specific language</i> and <i>vocabulary</i>, <i>sensory details</i>, <i>precise descriptions</i>, <i>formatting</i>, and <i>pictures</i>.</li><li>Ensure that students understand all of the academic vocabulary embedded within these targets (<i>specific</i>, <i>language</i>, <i>vocabulary</i>, <i>sensory</i>, <i>describe</i>, <i>precisely</i>, <i>formatting</i>) by providing synonyms as necessary. You may want to call out specifically the word <i>sensory</i>, highlighting that it contains the same root word as <i>sense</i> and explaining that they will be using their senses to learn about things in the natural world, and writing descriptions that show how they used their senses to take it in.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide nonlinguistic symbols (e.g., light bulb for <i>idea</i>; eyes for <i>observe</i>) to assist struggling readers in making connections with vocabulary. These symbols can be used throughout the year. Specifically, they can be used in directions and learning targets.</li></ul>



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Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Observing and Sketching the Natural World (15 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students that they are going to take a look at nature to practice observing and recording. If there is a window in the classroom, look out of it, and describe what you see in the sky to the students. (Note: If looking out a window is not possible, project an image or show an illustration from a book of a cloudy sky or one of the vibrant photographs from <i>The Most Beautiful Roof in the World</i>).</li><li>• If possible, hang a piece of <b>chart paper</b> next to the window; otherwise hang the chart on a wall where all students can see it and where it can be drawn on. Draw a quick sketch of the view. As you draw, ask the students to comment on what you are doing; try to elicit these hints about sketching from your students:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Keep your focus on the object you're drawing, not on your page.</li><li>* Without lifting the pencil from the page, draw the outline first.</li><li>* Don't erase!</li></ul></li><li>• Ask the class why scientists such as Meg Lowman must sometimes work silently when out in the natural world. Listen for students' understanding that being silent helps the observer to focus, allows you to hear the natural sounds, and may invite wildlife to appear.</li><li>• Remind students of all of the work they have done on active listening, and say: "This is such an important application of that skill. Scientists really need to use active listening skills to do their work."</li><li>• Invite the students to spend a few minutes closely observing in the classroom in preparation for observing in the natural world: the furniture and their shapes, the quality of the light and shadows, and the things on the wall and ceilings.</li><li>• Ask students to share examples of their precise, detailed observations. Encourage sensory language, such as: "The desks look brown and hard, as if they came from a tree," or "The light is bright and sharp," and "The air conditioning is making the paper rustle on the wall."</li><li>• Add the students' comments to your chart paper sketch if applicable, blending the text with your drawing by labeling the drawings. (Use the pages from the text you projected as a model for how to do this.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide anchor charts for processes, such as "How to observe and sketch." This would include question words with nonlinguistic representations (e.g., eyes for <i>observe</i>, pencil for <i>sketch</i>).</li><li>• Consider providing extra time for tasks and answering questions in class discussions. Some students need more time to process and translate information.</li></ul>



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Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Recording Observations about the Natural World (30 minutes)</b></p> <p><i>Note: This activity involves students going outside to observe nature. If this is not feasible, bring in natural objects for students to observe. See the more detailed teaching note, above.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain to students that scientists often use a field journal to take notes as they observe closely, collect data, and record information about their surroundings. Tell students that they will be keeping their own field journal throughout this unit. They will use it during the school day and for homework.</li><li>• Distribute blank <b>field journals</b>.</li><li>• Share with students that now they will be going outside to study nature. Remind students of the class norms for behavior outside of the classroom. Be sure each class member has his or her journal and a pencil.</li><li>• Take the class outside to the spot you have already identified (see Teaching Note, end of Lesson 1). Arrange the students around the natural space so that all can see and hear you.</li><li>• Tell the students that you want them to make a list in their heads:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “What colors do you see?”</li><li>* “What sounds do you hear?”</li></ul></li><li>• Remind them of the importance of silence for the process of scientific observation of nature. Ask them to silently watch and listen for a few minutes.</li><li>• Then have students share with a partner some of the colors and sounds they noticed. Ask them if they can find any clues to what season it is. Call on a few students to share their answers (e.g., chewed acorns, dying flowers, ice).</li><li>• Tell students that they now will get to journal on their own. Give some basic directions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Start writing on the first blank page.</li><li>* Put today’s date at the top of the page, as scientists do.</li><li>* Include drawings as well as text (make the drawings quick and simple).</li><li>* Include thoughts or opinions, as well as observations. (It is all right to include personal information and ideas such as “I am cold,” “I think this tree might be dying,” “The leaves look beautiful against the sky.”)</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider writing and breaking down multistep directions into numbered elements for observing the natural world. Students can return to these guidelines to make sure they are on track.</li><li>• Consider providing sensory words and pictures or visuals to accompany those words to choose from when writing in their journals for students who struggle with language.</li></ul>



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Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set a <b>timer</b> to give the students 5 minutes to silently record notes in their journals. As students work, write silently in your own journal.</li><li>• After 5 minutes, ask the class to stop writing and focus whole group. Cold call or ask for volunteers to share their writing and drawing. Press students to be as specific and descriptive as possible, by asking questions, such as: "What exact color is it?" "Does it remind you of anything?" "What are the details?" Recognize efforts that include descriptive details and precise language.</li><li>• Invite students to move to a new spot within the designated area, so that their perspective shifts. Tell the class: "When you move to a different spot, your <i>perspective</i>, or point of view, changes. Things that you couldn't see are now visible, and other things are hidden. When you really want to do a careful observation of a setting, it is important to view it from more than one perspective."</li><li>• Give students 2 minutes to again observe silently. Ask them what new things they notice now that they have changed their position. (Although students don't need to record their observations during this second round, feel free to ask them to if time permits.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>





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Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Debrief: Journaling Experience (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Return to the classroom. Ask students:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What did you like about observing closely?”</li> <li>* “What was difficult about it?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>Acknowledge the challenges and help students to offer ideas that might address their classmates’ challenges.</li> <li>Remind students that they are going to be research scientists and are preparing to do the careful work that it will require to observe in nature in order to create a field journal page.</li> <li>Revisit the learning targets by asking students to show by raising one hand if they used specific language and vocabulary to describe events precisely in their field journals, two hands if they used sensory details, and to wave both hands if they used formatting and pictures to add to the meaning of their field journal entries. Ask students to share examples of having met these learning targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For students needing additional support producing language, consider offering a sentence frame or starter, or a cloze sentence to assist with language production, and provide the structure required (e.g., “I liked _____ about observing closely. I thought _____ was difficult when observing closely.”).</li> </ul>
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decorate the cover of your journal with words, drawings, and nature photographs to make it special and personalized to reflect what you like about and in nature.</li> <li>Continue your independent reading book for this unit.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: For the remainder of this unit, most of the work students will do in their field journals will be assigned as homework.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>