

LESSON PLAN

Exploratorium

Episode 17 – “From Forest to Furniture”

In the Exploratorium video, curator Daniel Ackermann introduced us to how wood is used in the decorative arts. Wood is a natural resource that come from trees. The US Forest Service and the Ad Council have developed a fascinating program called, *Discover the Forest*. One of the activities they encourage you to do is to identify trees.

Whether you are at home in your yard or neighborhood, in a park, or at Old Salem, there are probably trees nearby. **This activity, adapted from the *Discover the Forest* program (discovertheforest.org), leads you on a tree discovery experience. Please follow the next steps as you prepare for your discovery experience.**

1. Talk with the adult(s) who takes care of you about this project. Work together to determine:
 - where you will go look for trees
 - what time will you go look for trees
 - who will go with you when you look for trees
 - what will you wear when you look for trees
 - What will you take with you when you are looking for trees
 - what time will you get back.
2. Before you leave to look at trees, please remember the following safety tips:
 - Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back.
 - Do not go out if bad weather is forecasted or if bad weather is taking place. If you are outside when a thunderstorm approaches, quickly take shelter in a house or car. If there isn't a building or car nearby, then crouch under a cluster of trees. Do not go to water or a clearing, and do not stand next to a lone tree.
 - Use sunscreen and take water for drinking.
 - Do not feed animals that you see – no matter how friendly they may be.
 - Do not eat anything growing in the forest. Do not eat fruit or mushrooms or leaves.
 - If you are near railroad tracks, stay off them.
 - Bring a flashlight just in case you are out close to sunset.
 - Wear bright colors and watch for cars.

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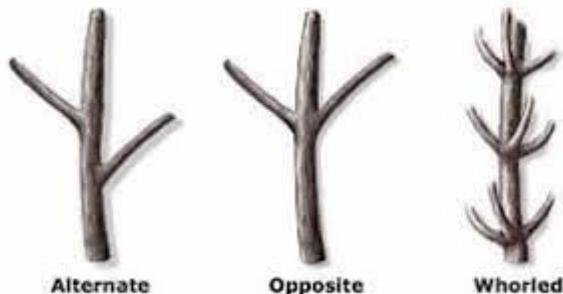
Activity #1

Go exploring to look at trees and their elements (bark, leaves, structure, etc).

1. Make sure that you are wearing the right clothing and shoes. Pack a backpack with water, snacks, sunscreen, a flashlight, notebook, and pencil. You may want to take a camera if you have one (but it's not necessary).
2. Remember not to take any bark or leaves from a tree without asking permission from an adult who owns the tree or from the park ranger (if the tree is located within a park).
3. When you find a tree that interests you, take a leaf and bark sample with permission. Also, draw sketches of the bark and leaves in your notebook. Make notes about the bark and leaves:
 - Is the bark ridged, smooth, or something else?
 - Are the leaves flat or do they have needles?



- Look at the branching on the trees – the part where the leaves are. If the leaves grow directly opposite of each other, the tree is probably a maple, dogwood, ash, or chestnut tree. This type of branching is called, “opposite branching.” Another type of branching is called, “alternate branching.” Alternate branching occurs in most other types of trees. There is also one more type of branching called, “whorled.” If three or more leaves or branches originate from the same location on the stem, then then we say that they are whorled.



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4. When you get home, take a moment to identify the tree that interested you. Using your notebook (that hopefully is full of notes from your walk) and your leaf and bark samples, and with the permission of the adult caregiver in your home, use this website to help you identify your tree sample:
https://www.thoughtco.com/these-tree-parts-identify-1343508?utm_source=pinterest
5. Use your leaf and bark samples to create a rubbing. You'll need the following supplies:
 - Leaf sample
 - Bark sample
 - Paper
 - Crayons, colored pencils, or pens.
 - Place your leaf on a hard surface.
 - Put the piece of paper on top of it.
 - Using a crayon or pencil or pen, rub it across the paper, going from side to side, up and down. You should see the outline of the leaf appear.
 - Do the same for with your bark sample.
 - Display your rubbing for your family to see or keep it in your notebook, saving it for you to look at later.
6. With the help of the adult in your home, do an internet search to find your state tree. Take a moment to learn about it. Have you seen your state tree when you've been outside? Where in your state would you find your state tree?

Activity #2

Become a research star by using the MESDA Database to learn more about the furniture and craftsmen highlighted in the video!

In the Exploratorium video, curator Daniel Ackermann showed us several pieces of beautiful furniture made from trees that are commonly found in the south.

Did you know that you can learn more about the furniture by doing a simple search on our MESDA database? "MESDA" is the acronym for our Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, located here at Old Salem Museums & Gardens. MESDA is museum where people come to learn about the objects produced in the early years of the American South and used in homes and the landscapes of this time period.

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Let's learn about Robert Wilkins, the cabinetmaker mentioned in the video.

1. With the permission of the adult in your home, use the following link to access the MESDA Craftsman Database: <https://mesda.org/collection/craftsman/>
2. On the search page, enter Robert Wilkins' name in the field labeled, "Craftsman Name." Be sure to enter the last name, followed by a comma, and then the first name.

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MESDA Craftsman Database Search

Keyword Search
IMPORTANT: Do not use quotations marks around search terms.

Craftsman Name
Last name first separated by a comma (Shaw, John). If no results try surname only.

Trade
Pull down to select from the list of Trades.

Geographic Location
Pull down to select from the list of Geographic Locations. To search artisans from all cities and towns in a state, enter the state abbreviation in Keyword (be sure to use traditional abbreviations, i.e., Md., D.C., Va. N.C., S.C., Ga. Tenn., Ky.). NOTE: Some artisans do not have a specified city or town and will only be found by using state name in the pull-down menu (i.e., "Maryland (unspecified)" or "Alabama").

Dates
IMPORTANT: Use single year date only (1775). Results will include craftsmen working in that specific year as well as craftsmen documented as working during span of years that include that date (i.e., 1770-1790).

Summary
Pull down to select from the list of Summary terms.

Status
Pull down to select from the list of Status terms.

MESDA Craftsman ID

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3. After you enter Mr. Wilkins' name, click **SUBMIT** at the bottom of the page.
4. The search will produce two records, one for Caleb Casbah, Robert Wilkin's apprentice, and one for Robert Wilkins. Click on the record for Robert Wilkins.
5. After reviewing the information on file, answer the following questions:
 - What was Mr. Wilkin's geographic location?
 - According to the file, Mr. Wilkins' leased property on November 14, 1756. Where was the property located?
 - Mr. Wilkins' filed a will in Norfolk County on January 22, 1762. A will is a legal document in which a person records how to dispose of his or her personal property/belongings after death. In his will, what does Mr. Wilkins want to do with a "certain Quantity of black Walnut Plank now lying in my House"?

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ANSWERS:

- Norfolk, Virginia
- In Norfolk County, near Great Bridge of Southern Branch of Elizabeth River
- He wants it to be sold.