

# Maple Syrup and Forest Ecology

## Pre-activity: Needs, Contains, Provides

Please play this with your students before the field trip. This game is similar to the popular game categories.

Divide your class into smaller groups. Each group will start by brainstorming what a forest **needs**. Give them a couple minutes. Call time, pencils down. When finished with the brainstorm go from group to group and have each group give one answer. If the group is the only one with a particular answer they get a point, if multiply groups have the same answer they must all cross it off and no one receives a point. For example: Group one thought of water but no one else did – Group one gets one point.

Group two thought of trees and so did Group three – neither of them get points for that answer.

Continue the game, next brainstorming what a forest **contains**, then what a forest **provides**. This game can get great discussion and debate going among teams. Let the discussions play out as long as they are staying positive. You will have to be the last word on whether a team gets a point – just use your best judgment and have fun. Small prizes – like pencils – forests provide - can be handed out to the team with the most points. Having prizes (external motivation) never hurts.

One key to playing the game is not to reveal all three categories at once, introduce the new category after each round.

If you don't have time to play the entire game, divide your students into three groups have each group brainstorm one of the categories and share with the other two groups.

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## Post-activity: A day in the Woods

Read *One Day in the Woods* to your students by George, Jean Craighead. (1988)

Rebecca is out exploring the woods searching for an oven bird that her uncle challenged her to find. Throughout her wanderings in the woods, Rebecca meets up with many animals and plants whose natural history and relationships are described in detail. Jean Craighead George has made the woods come alive for readers through the travels of this young girl.

When finished with the story have your students write a story about **their** day in the woods at Woodland Dunes Nature Center.

Another good book to read after the field trip is *A Tree in the Forest* by Jan Thornhill. (1991)

A maple seed lands in a decaying tree lying on the forest floor. The seed spouts and grows from a seedling to a mature maple tree enduring drought, fire, tapping for sap, a lightning strike and a multitude of animals living in it. After 200 years of life, the tree finally falls and begins to decay, becoming new soil for a young maple seed. The colorful detailed illustrations invite the reader to look for more than is written in the text.

This story highlights the life and death of a maple tree. Have your students write a story from the perspective of a Maple tree, what do they think about the birds and other animals using them for nests and food? What do they think of the squirrels running and chattering along their branches, humans tapping them for sap, how do they feel in spring, summer, winter – during storms and peaceful days in the woods? Explore the world of creative writing with your students!