

14 Into the Woods



1 Unit summary

Woodlands are the setting for many fairy tales and the home of imaginary creatures. They are also the 'natural environment' for much of the British Isles and are consequently the home of many iconic British animals and plants. In this unit children explore and enjoy both the story book and 'real life' elements of woodlands as they plan their own trip 'into the woods'.

Science learning

Children will become familiar with, and be able to name, a growing number of native plants and animals. They will also begin to use simple secondary sources to discover more about British woodlands.

Science for practitioners

When environments are left without human interference they gradually change as different plants and animals become established, until a stable 'climax community' is reached. For much of the British Isles this natural state is woodland. The predominant trees will vary depending on the location but might include oak, beech and Scots pine.

Science progression

In KS1 children will learn to identify and name common plants and animals. They will also need to recognise that different plants and animals are suited to different habitats and begin to understand how different habitats meet the needs of different animals. They will also need to be able to talk about simple food chains.

Switched on Science links

- Key Stage 1, Year 1, Topic 1 – On Safari
- Key Stage 1, Year 2, Topic 3 – Mini Worlds

Prime areas

Communication and Language

Fairy stories such as *Little Red Riding Hood* are a valuable opportunity to build your own confidence with retelling a story orally. When you haven't got to concentrate on reading the words or showing pictures to the children you can really focus on the children's reactions and bring the story alive.

it is very likely that at least some of the children will be apprehensive about the idea of woodlands. This is a valuable opportunity to support children to talk about their own fears and to begin to recognise that other people feel nervous too.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Because of their experience of stories such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Gruffalo*,

Physical Development

Children plan and prepare their own picnic, giving ample opportunity to discuss healthy food choices and appropriate hygiene measures.

Specific areas

Literacy

Labelled pictures, such as the ones provided on the website of a fox, ladybird and tree, are a useful way to incorporate children's growing science knowledge into a literacy lesson.

Mathematics

The variety of tree leaves presents an opportunity to talk about shape and size, and to sort according to a variety of criteria. Support children to think of questions that can be answered with a yes or no, e.g. 'Is it big?'.

Understanding the World

Encourage children to make maps or miniature landscapes using small world props, perhaps in the sandpit. They could show the path taken through the woods of a story book character such as *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Gruffalo*.

Expressive Arts and Design

Introduce children to the work of Andy Goldsworthy, who creates art within the environment using natural objects. Encourage them to work together to make pictures outside using autumn leaves or other found objects.



2 Getting ready



Resources

- Leaf identification poster ('Spot the leaf'). Identification keys will help you and the children to identify the plants and animals that you find. A backpack with a magnifying glass, notebook and specimen card to record findings would also be useful.
- Cameras and digital microphones would help children to record what they see and hear on their trip to the woods.
- Online resources via My Rising Stars.



Key vocabulary

Help children to recognise and name some of the animals that live in British woodlands (fox, rabbit, squirrel, deer, owl, spider, etc.) and some that don't (lion, wolf, monkey). As they begin to recognise and name a few native trees (such as oak, hazel and beech) help them to learn that they are also a type of plant. They might also learn to recognise some other plants such as ivy, bluebells and honeysuckle.



Home science links

Invite children to bring in any suitable books that they have at home, e.g. fiction books that are set in a woodland. If you do arrange a class trip to the woods you will want to involve as many helpers as possible.



Health and safety

If you are planning on taking your class to the wood you will need to do a thorough pre-visit check. Because it can be very easy to get lost in the woods, you might consider marking the ends of paths with laminated signs to show the limits of how far adults may take their groups. You can also mark the signs on a simple map so that your adult helpers can work out where they are at all times.



Websites and books

Many fiction books are set in woodlands including *The Gruffalo* and the fairy stories *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Goldilocks*.

The woodland trust has a website called Nature Detectives which is brimming with ideas for things for children to do outside, at all times of the year. It also contains a selection of downloadable identification keys.

The British Library website has lots of wildlife recordings, including foxes, badgers and a woodland dawn chorus.

The school resources section of the RSPB website has lots of different woodland birds with audio clips of their song.



3 Explorations

Make sure that children understand that trees are a type of plant. Encourage them to notice what trees have in common with smaller plants, as well as how they are different.

Introductory activity

Play children some woodland sounds (such as bird song, foxes barking or badgers moving through the undergrowth; see the 'Websites and books' section). Invite them to speculate what the sounds might be and to guess where

they might have been recorded. Later during the unit, perhaps during their own trip to the woods or in the school playground, they might like to make sound recordings of their own using digital microphones.

Focussed exploration

Activity 1 – Into the woods

A class trip to a woodland would make an exciting change to some of the usual class visits. Moreover, the only expense would be the cost of transport and of food. Do involve children in planning and preparing for the trip. As well as

enjoying the experience of being in a woodland setting, children can search for different trees and other plants. They could also search for signs of animal life including bird song, footprints and poo or identify any animals that they spot.

Activity 2 – Preparing the Picnic

Spend some time with children finding out what foods are suitable for a picnic and planning which foods they would like to take. This might include sandwiches, fruit and cake. Use recipe books

to work out what ingredients you would need. The day before the visit could be spent with children making cakes and sandwiches ready for the picnic.

Activity 3 – Exploration Kits

Work with the children to decide what you would need to have in your exploration kit before going on an adventure to the woods. Useful equipment could include identification keys, binoculars, magnifying glasses, tweezers, specimen record cards and a camera. Spend some time ensuring that the children know how to use each piece of equipment.

For example, you might spend time with small groups, teaching children how to use magnifying glasses to look carefully at a collection of leaves. Find a place in the classroom where the exploration kits can be stored so that children are able to access them independently.

Activity 4 – Fact or Fiction

Early in the topic, assemble a collection of 'woodland books' including both fiction and non-fiction books. Share some of these with

the children and invite them to talk about similarities and differences between the different books.

Free-flow exploration

Activity 1 – Young Explorers

Ensuring that the exploration kits are available at all times will mean that children can use them to support their imaginative play as they go hunting for dragons and dinosaurs. Alternatively, they might use them for

more serious scientific exploration. The time spent ensuring that children confidently know how to use all of the equipment in the kits means that they will be able to use them in a more focussed way.

Taking it further

Make time to visit your woodland, a copse, or even a single tree, several times over the course of a year. Encourage children to notice what has changed and what is the same. They might like to make drawings and take photographs of what they see; make

recordings of what they hear and research to find out more about the plants and animals that they find. Help children to keep a record of what they find, perhaps as a classroom display or as a book that is added to each time a visit is made.



4 Characteristics of effective learning

Playing and exploring

- In 'Young Explorers' children are inspired to go into role as scientists.
- Children are fascinated to find out more about the reality of animals that they are already familiar with as story book characters

Active learning

- Children are keen to record their artwork and small world creations so that they can be shown to families or uploaded onto the website for others to see.

- When making sound recordings, children are willing to have several goes if their first recordings are not very clear.

Creating and thinking critically

- With support, children are able to evaluate their own work, perhaps commenting on how the picnic could have been even better.
- Children are able to use woodland maps to recognise features (such as the path or the pond).

Early learning goals

ELG 1 Listening & Attention: All activities; **ELG 2 Understanding:** All activities; **ELG 3 Speaking:** All activities; **ELG 4 Moving & Handling:** Focussed exploration 2; **ELG 5 Health & Self-care:** All activities, especially Focussed exploration 2; **ELG 6 Self-confidence & Self-awareness:** All activities; **ELG 7 Managing Feelings & Behaviour:** All activities; **ELG 8 Making Relationships:** All activities, especially Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 9 Reading:** Focussed exploration 4; **ELG 10 Writing:** Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 11 Numbers:** Focussed exploration 2; **ELG 12 Shape, Space & Measure:** Introductory activity, Focussed exploration 2; **ELG 13 People & Communities:** N/A; **ELG 14 The World:** All Focussed explorations; **ELG 15 Technology:** Most activities, Expressive Arts and Design, Introductory activity, Taking it further; **ELG 16 Exploring & Using Media & Materials:** Expressive Arts and Design; **ELG 17 Being Imaginative:** Free-flow exploration 1.