

Sketch From Nature

Parent Guide, page 1 of 2

Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, children will look closely at something from nature and make a sketch of what they see.

WHY

Even though not all children are good at drawing what they see, the act of trying to draw helps many children take their time to examine details.

TIME

- 15 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best with children in grades kindergarten through 4.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- *inset*: a small picture set inside a larger one
- *texture*: the feel or look of something, such as rough wood or silky fur

GET READY

- Read the book *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* to learn about one of America’s most famous biologists and her work in the environmental movement. A reading guide is available at http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/environment/environment_read.pdf.
- Explore your home and its surrounding outdoors to look for things from the natural world. Have these examples ready in case your child has trouble thinking of them.

YOU NEED

- *Directions* sheets (*attached*)
- *Step Back in Time* sheets (*attached*)
- Paper
- Art supplies

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/environment/>.

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- Microscope or magnifying glass
- Something from the natural world *OR* computer with Internet access
- *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* by Laurie Lawlor (*optional*)
- Measuring tool (*optional*)

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For adults and kids to follow together.

1. *(optional)* Look at the page of the book where Rachel sketches animals in a museum. Can you see which animals in her sketches match the animals in the museum?
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2. Locate something in your home or its surrounding outdoors that is from the natural world and is interesting to you.

Tip If you have trouble locating something, consider drawing from a photograph instead. The Smithsonian's Encyclopedia of Life has a lot of great photos and information. (<http://eol.org>)

3. Start your sketch by drawing just the outline. If you were going to hold the object up to a light and see just the shadow on the paper, what shape would your shadow be?
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4. Once you have the outline, add in details of the object's texture. Does it have all the same texture? Are some parts smooth and other parts rough? How can you use your art supplies to show that texture?
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5. Next, think about the colors of your drawing. Colors in nature can be hard to show with art supplies. If you have a very special color, try blending together more than one of your supplies to make the color (such as using both the red and orange colored pencils in that area) or use words to describe it.
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7. Finally, many scientific drawings include a look at what the object looks like under a magnifier or microscope. This is sometimes called an inset. In one corner of your drawing, add an inset of what you see through a magnifier. Does it surprise you?

Tip This will not work if you are drawing from a photograph, but look to see if there are any close-up or magnified photographs you could use to make an inset.

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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/environment>.

Rachel Carson's love of nature started when she was a young girl. Beyond her mother's love of nature, Rachel's frequent trip outdoors were also motivated by a nature-study movement in the early 1900s, with books and articles advising parents to help children understand nature and want to protect it. Rachel's favorite magazine, *St. Nicholas*, included nature-study articles and illustrations and when she was only ten, Rachel published her first piece of writing in *St. Nicholas*.

In school, Rachel worked very hard and encouraged her classmates to take their studies seriously as well. In addition to top grades, she also worked on and wrote for her school newspaper. Her teachers were important role models who encouraged her to grow up to be a writer or a scientist—and she ended up becoming both!

Although it was very hard for women scientists to publish their writing in the 1930s and 1940s, Rachel's scientific research and storytelling skills helped her become well known for books and articles about the oceans. But in the late 1950s, Rachel felt that she needed to share the newest science about how widespread use of man-made pesticides hurt the environment. She did a lot of research in libraries, wrote to other experts on the topic, and spoke to other authors to get ideas on the best way to share her research. In 1962



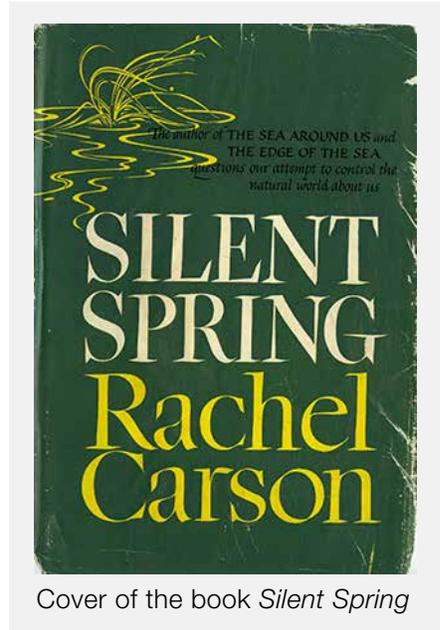
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she published the book *Silent Spring*, which brought a lot of attention to pesticides and other ways that people change the environment.

Some people think that the modern environmental movement might not have started without *Silent Spring*'s wake-up call. Today, the environmental movement has made great changes in the ways everyday people, companies, and governments think about balancing the needs of people with nature's needs. Some topics that environmentalists today think are important include: how people change the places animals live, what chemicals people put in the air or water, and how people make and use energy. What environmental topic is most important to you?



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Teacher Guide

Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Record observations in images and words.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Observations include a reasonable level of detail.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 History Content Standards

- 4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

AAAS Science Benchmarks

Grade K-2 Benchmarks

- 12-D-1: Describe and compare things in terms of number, shape, texture, size, weight, color, and motion.
- 12-D-2: Draw pictures that correctly portray at least some features of the thing being described.

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