

EVENT MAP

Students draw a treasure map as they hike, highlighting discoveries and features along the trail and making quick sketches of plants, animals, or other surprises and writing notes to record memories.

Have your students ever come back from a nature hike and been unable to give a vivid report of their experience? "How was your hike?" "Good." "What did you see?" "Trees and stuff." Externalizing thinking (getting our ideas and observations down on paper) is a good way to enhance attention and memory. Making an event map, or a physical chart of experiences in time and space, is a way of intentionally recording memories. In this activity, students make a map of hidden treasure. The treasure is not buried at the end of the trail; it is all along it. When they return from the hike, students will not only remember the sequence of events along the trail but also have a spatial memory of where they were and the distances between the discoveries. An optional extension guides students to write a narrative of their "treasure hunt." This is valuable practice in storytelling and an opportunity for students to strengthen their writing skills.

NATURAL PHENOMENA

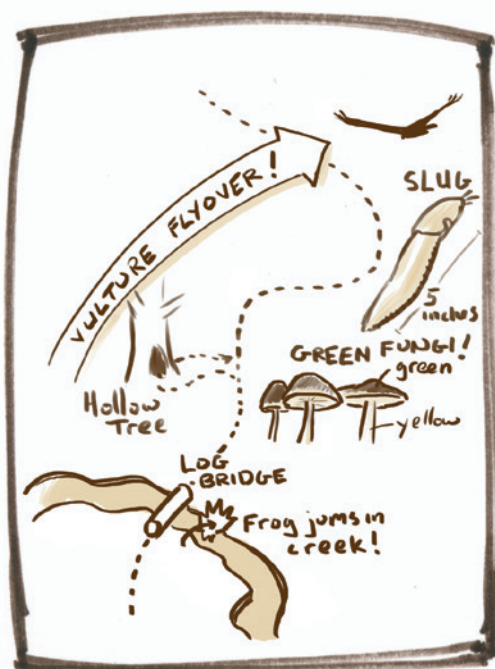
Lead this activity on a level mile- or half-mile-long trail in a natural area. Ideally students should be able to see the whole route from the start and be able to track their progress as they walk. (We are halfway there; we are three-quarters of the way, etc.) The trail should be clearly marked and free from hazards so that students can make the hike at their own pace.

PROCEDURE SUMMARY

1. Make a treasure map of things you find along the trail, using writing and drawing.
2. After each trail treasure, add a dashed line to show the section of trail you traveled.
3. Take your time, and do not disturb others in the group.
4. (In the field, or when students return) Using your map to guide you, write a story of your adventures.

DEMONSTRATION

When the white-board icon appears in the procedure description: Draw a dotted line that represents the shape of the route (loop, winding trail, etc.). Show the locations of a few prominent landmarks



Time

Introduction: 10 minutes
Activity: 40–120 minutes
Discussion: 10 minutes
Writing extension (can occur in the field or when you return): 15 minutes



Materials

- Journals and pencils
- Two group leaders



Teaching Notes

This activity can stand alone or can "run in the background" as students complete a field day, with the group stopping every now and then to reflect on what they have seen and to add to their treasure maps. Use your knowledge of your exploration site and your students to decide whether to keep the group together or let them explore separately at their own pace. It is ideal for each student to set their own pace, but at times it might be necessary to keep the group together.



If your students will need more structure to be successful with this activity, set it up so that you walk ahead and an assistant or chaperone sends students down the trail after you, separated by about a minute to ensure they have space to wander at their own pace.

In an optional follow-up activity, students look back at their maps and write a story about their adventure or "treasure hunt." This approach is a great way for students to develop written communication and storytelling skills by building on what they've already captured on their maps. Writing a story also deepens their memory of the experience.

to help orient the students both to the landscape and their map. Then demonstrate how you could show events (e.g., a vulture fly-by or frog jump) and discoveries (cool mushrooms or slug). Model using words, pictures, and numbers.

PROCEDURE STEP-BY-STEP

1. Tell students they will make an event map showing treasures they discover as they walk along a trail.

- a. "We are going to search for hidden treasure. You will each make your own map. Unlike a pirate map where the treasure is found at the end, this map is of the treasures we discover along the way."
- b. "As we walk, you will add drawings and notes about the treasures you find."

2. Show students the route, either on a map or pointing it out in the landscape, and demonstrate on a whiteboard how to lightly record the route, making a template that can be added to as they walk.



- a. "Our route will take us in a loop, through the meadow and over the creek to the pond, then back along the forest trail, again crossing the creek and returning here."
- b. "You will want to make sure you have room for the whole map and what you find by lightly penciling in the creek, trail, and pond like this. These are just guidelines that you will be reinforcing or drawing over later, so make them as light as possible."
- c. "As you go, try to keep a general idea of where you are on the route so that you can add landmarks or discoveries at appropriate distances on the map."

3. Tell students that they can get creative with their maps by making up place names or making a sidebar of notes about discoveries and a key to where they are found on the map.

- a. "You can either add the little sketches along the side of the trail or make a sidebar of notes and sketches and use a letter key to show where each discovery can be found on the map." (Add to the whiteboard demonstration.)
- b. "You can also add creative place names for significant landmarks on our path."

4. Begin by hiking the trail together, and stop early on at an interesting landmark or plant to record as an example together. Choose something that everyone in the group can easily see.

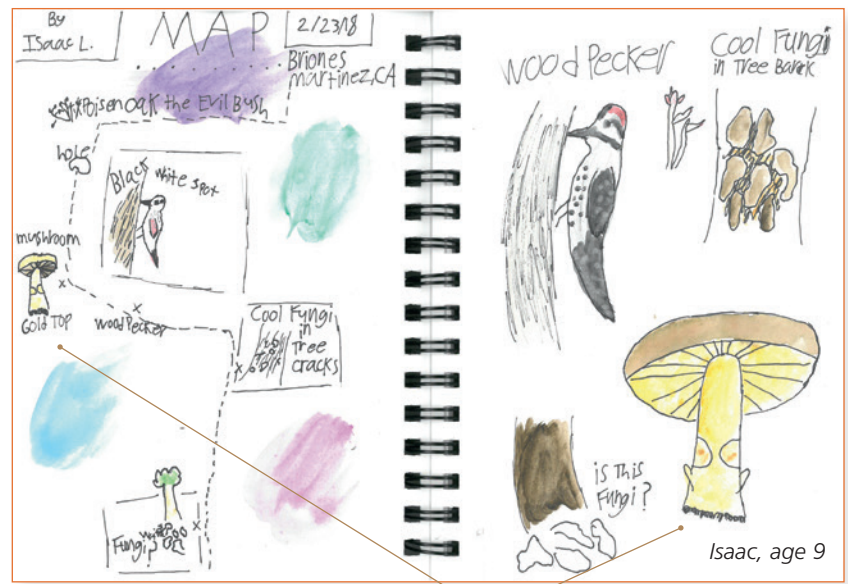
- a. "Here is our first trail treasure. Use words, pictures, and numbers to describe this jewel on your map."
- b. "When you are done, add a dashed line to show the section of trail we have already traveled."
- c. "Keep your eyes open as we walk. Who can find the next treasure?"

5. If your group is self-directed, continue hiking, stopping as the group wishes in order to record group treasures or allowing students to hike at their own pace and record their own treasures.

6. (Alternatively) Set up a solo-hike protocol whereby individual students are sent down the trail at intervals, one leader walking ahead and the other staying behind to send students off and collect stragglers.

- a. "We each will be finding our own treasure from this point forward. We are now going to continue down the trail separately. I will walk ahead, stopping here and there to add other treasures to my map."
- b. "Every thirty seconds, my assistant will choose the next person to start down the trail to make their map. On the trail, walk attentively and look carefully for treasures. When you find one, stop and add it to your journal. Add at least seven treasures to your map. Keep most stops to five minutes or less. This is a solo walk. You may pass other students who are stopped, but do not disturb them or walk together. When we get to the end of the trail, we will share our discoveries with one another."
- c. Give trail directions and safety reminders as necessary.

A map with inset icons shows you the route and the sequence of discoveries.



Detailed drawings and notes correspond to the labeled icons on the map, enabling the student to capture more information about each find.

7. (After everyone has completed the hike) Give students a few minutes to add to their maps, adding scale features, embellishments, or place names.

- a. "Take five minutes to improve your map by adding scientific features such as a scale, direction arrow, or key, or creative pirate-style embellishments or other notes. Be sure to add the metadata of the date and location somewhere on the map. It's OK to use ideas you saw on someone else's map."

8. Have students lay their maps open on a picnic table or on the ground.

- a. "Take a moment to look at some of your classmate's maps. What are some features you like?"
- b. "What was the best treasure you found? What surprised you?"

DISCUSSION

Lead a discussion using the general discussion questions. Interperse pair talk with group discussion.

General Discussion

- a. "What are some feelings you had while walking along and making your map? Add them to your page, starting with the words 'I felt' so that it's clear this is a feeling, not an observation. This will help you remember the experience better later."
- b. "What did you enjoy about making your map? What was challenging about it?"
- c. "How did the process of making the map affect your experience? What was it like to make the map?"

EXTENSION

Writing Narratives

When you have returned from the field trip, either immediately or after some time has passed, gather students with their maps. Tell them that they'll have time to look back over their maps and write a story about their adventures.

1. Gather students and give them their maps, then tell them to take a few minutes to look back and remember their experiences.

2. Give students a minute to think about how they would tell the story of the adventure they had while making their map.

- a. "Take a moment to think. How would you tell the story of your map-making adventures to someone else?"

- b. "Imagine you were talking to someone who had never been to the place where we made our maps. How would you talk about the setting?"
- c. "What kinds of details would you include? How would you describe the treasures you found?"
- d. "Are there any feelings or responses you had when you found different things on the trail? How would you talk about them in your story?"

3. Tell students to take 2 minutes to tell a partner the story of their adventure, then switch roles. Encourage students to practice active listening when they're in the listening role.

4. Explain that students will now get to write out a story that goes with their map.

5. Explain that students should have the goal of telling their story in a way that is meaningful to them, while including details that will help a reader understand their experiences.

- a. "You're going to write a story capturing your experiences making your map."
- b. "Tell the story in a way that is meaningful to you. For example, you might choose to spend most of the story describing the cool or exciting things you saw. Or you might want to only briefly mention what you found, and spend more time talking about the feelings of excitement, curiosity, or surprise that you experienced along the way."
- c. "Your story will, though, need to make sense to someone who wasn't there on the journey with you, so you will need to include details about the setting and each of your finds."

6. Offer some scaffolding and ideas about how students could structure their story.

- a. "If you're not sure where to begin, you could start by writing a short description of the setting, focusing on details like the weather or what the trail looked like."
- b. "Then introduce yourself. You could write in the first person ('First, I saw...') or create an adventure-character version of yourself to write about in the third person ('Aria the Adventurer went off on a journey to...' or 'Welcome to the adventures of Edmund, Curiosity Machine')."
- c. "Share about each treasure. Look at the pictures on your map and use them to write about each find. Explain why you chose to include it on your map and why it was meaningful to you."

7. Encourage students to have fun, be playful, and get creative with elements in their story.

- a. "You came up with fun, cool, creative names for many of the events on your map. Use them in your story."

- b. "Use fun action words to bring the reader into the story and introduce events."
 - c. "For example, if a frog jumped into the pond, instead of just saying 'The frog jumped into the pond,' say 'SPLASH! a frog!'"
- 8. Give students 15–30 minutes to write their adventure stories.**
- 9. As they work, take time to circulate and offer support. If students are struggling to write out narratives, ask them to tell you parts of their story verbally, then coach them to write down what they narrated.**

- 10. After students have finished writing their stories, offer the opportunity for them to share what they've written or to talk about their experiences writing their stories.**

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Map Study

Every map is made for a reason. Some of them help with navigation; others present data. This map was created to record discoveries. Search for examples of maps that are made for different purposes. Ask students, "What was this map made to do, and who is the audience?"