

How Good are Your Powers of Observation?

You Will Need:

- 6 or 7 items from the natural world (for example, a leaf, a rock, a feather, a shell, a seed, an acorn, etc.)

Procedure:

1. Explain to students that taking the time to carefully observe an item can provide you with information you wouldn't necessarily notice otherwise. Point out that observing the natural world can often lead to questions to investigate.
2. Have students work in small groups. Give one item to each group. Have groups observe the item for a few minutes. Encourage them to pick up the item and pass it around. Have each group write down three or four observations about the item (i.e., a rock's color, weight, etc.) and three questions they have about the item.
3. When groups are done, have them share their findings with the rest of the class.

Note: Students may have a hard time coming up with questions. Here are a few you might suggest.

- **Leaf:** What kind of tree did the leaf come from?
Is there a reason the leaf has this particular shape?
Is there a reason the leaf has this particular color?
- **Rock:** What kind of rock is this?
How did the rock form?
Where was this rock found?
- **Feather:** What bird did the feather come from?
What is the function of the feather?
Why is the feather the color it is?
What sort of environment did the bird live in?
- **Shell:** What animal inhabited the shell?
Why is the shell shaped the way it is?
What type of environment did the animal that inhabited the shell live in?
- **Seed:** What kind of tree did the seed come from?
Why is the seed shaped the way it is?
What role does the seed play in its habitat?

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