

# JOURNALING PROMPTS

Distribute one prompt to each group of instructors.

## PROMPT 1: Comparison

This prompt was adapted from *Opening the World Through Nature Journaling*. These instructions are the same as the verbal directions you could give students as you showed an example of some strategies for recording information on a whiteboard (example below).

### Here's your challenge:

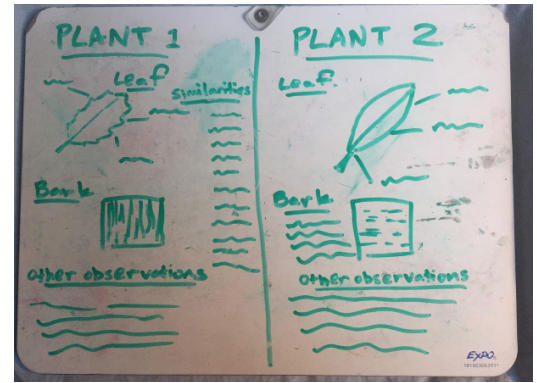
Compare two types of plants—but make sure to pick two types of plants that are kind of similar to each other—like two different kinds of trees, different kinds of small shrubs, or grasses, or flowers.

When you find two plants to compare, look for as many differences as possible. Look at their leaves, their branches or stems, where they grow, how tall they are, their colors, etc. Show what you learn in your journal using both drawing and writing.

Don't worry about making a pretty picture, spelling things right, or knowing what the plants are called—your goal is to notice as many differences between the two plant types as possible. Make sure you record everything you learn because maybe you will notice something no one else has ever seen before.

It might help you to use one page of your journal to focus on one plant type and the opposite page to focus on the other plant type—you can also list any similarities you notice in the middle between your two drawings.

If your plants are smaller than your paper, you could show them life-size. If your plants are bigger than your paper (like a tree or a bush), you don't have to draw the whole plant—you could just show a leaf and what a section of the bark or stem looks like.



Field Journaling with Students-BEETLES PL Session Materials

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## PROMPT 2: Focus on one plant species: "Observation Olympics"

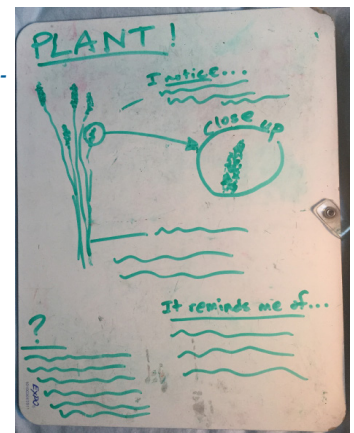
This prompt was adapted from *Opening the World Through Nature Journaling*. These instructions are the same as the verbal directions you could give students as you showed an example of some strategies for recording information on a whiteboard (example below).

Like a scientist who is describing a new species, you are going to gather as much information as possible about one type of plant. Use your observation skills (I notice, I wonder, it reminds me of) to learn as much as you can, and record what you find out in your journal.

Use some drawing and some writing to show your thoughts—but you can use more of whichever is more comfortable for you. It might help you to write a question mark in the corner of your paper and list all your questions below it as you go. You can also look really closely at different parts of the plant—like its leaves, branches, or bark.

If you feel like you've run out of things to describe, keep looking! Try using senses other than sight, changing your point of view, counting leaves or other parts of the plant, comparing your plant to other individuals of the same type, or looking for differences in color or texture.

Some scientists may have studied this *TYPE* of plant before, but it's pretty unlikely anyone has ever studied this specific plant as much as you will, so you might make some observations no one else ever has.



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### PROMPT 3: Zoom in, Zoom Out

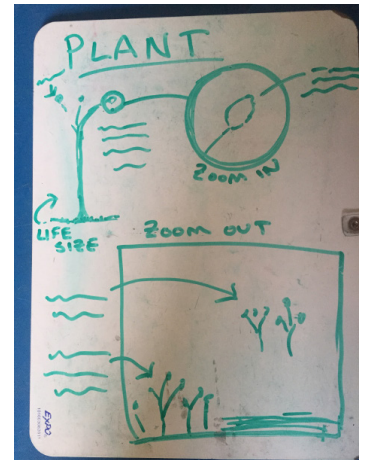
*This prompt was adapted from Opening the World Through Nature Journaling. These instructions are the same as the verbal directions you could give students as you showed them an example of some strategies for recording information on a whiteboard (example below).*

You're going to look at a plant from different perspectives to see what you can notice. Pick a smaller plant—one about the size of your journal. Start by looking at the plant and record a few details about it life-size in drawing and writing. You don't have to make a pretty picture of the plant—just get some observations of the plant on your paper.

Then pick one plant part—like a leaf, flower, bark, or stem—to zoom in on and do a close-up drawing. To show that this is a close-up drawing, you might want to put a circle around that feature on your life size drawing, then make a larger circle next to that and make your close-up drawing inside of that. Make sure to record observations in words, too.

Then zoom out and start to look at everything around the plant. Are there other individuals of this plant type close by? Where does this type of plant grow? Where does it not grow? What is the soil like around this plant? Where are leaves found on this plant? Where aren't they? Describe what you find below or around the plant. Is there any evidence of herbivores eating this plant? Would you expect this plant to look any different in another season?

Record what you learn using both drawing and writing, but use more of whichever is easier for you. When you're looking at the plant from far away, you could show its surroundings in drawings or describe them in wavy lines. If you show the plant and its surroundings using drawing, use an arrow to make it clear which plant you have focused on.



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### PROMPT 4: Make a field guide

*This prompt was adapted from Opening the World Through Nature Journaling. These instructions are the same as the verbal directions you could give as you showed students an example of some strategies for recording information on a whiteboard (example below).*

*Note: For this activity, it is useful to show students an example of a field guide before they begin journaling.*

In a moment, you will get to pick one plant part—like leaves, bark, stems, seeds, or flowers—to focus on as your subject for this activity. Then, in your journal you are going to make a field guide to this plant part. A field guide usually shows a picture and some information about unique features and characteristics of each subject.

Field guides show **different** species—not individuals from the same species. If you choose to focus on leaves, for example, you will describe one leaf from three or four different plant types or species.

Use drawing and writing to describe each subject, and show similarities and differences between different types of plants. Try to show at least four subjects in your field guide to start off with.

If you don't know what to look for, just write down a few "I notice's," or observations, next to each drawing. Don't worry about making it a pretty picture of your subject—focus on making lots of observations. Write something down if it is too hard to show in a drawing.

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