

Wilderness Investigations
HIGH SCHOOL
Appendix

Wild Journaling Tips
(in wild and not-so-wild places)

Introduction

There are many different types of journals and the outcomes can be manifested in many different ways. Journals can be used to explore one's feelings, to document one's life, to record data, to document observations, to act as a reminder of information one doesn't want to lose track of, and so forth. Journals can include writing and that may be in the form of prose, lists, poetry, free-form ramblings, etc. Many journals contain more than one writing combination. Some journalists choose to primarily use drawings, sketches, paintings, or some other visual art. Many journalists use a combination of writing, visual art, and some sort of recorded data set like graphs, tables or charts. With today's vast multitude of journaling options some fantastic journals are being produced using digital tools.

Whatever journaling medium -- whatever tools -- the main point of *wild journaling* is to facilitate experiences that allow the student to feel the wild in their world. Wild journaling should help students feel *part of not apart from the natural world* (David Orr; *Earth in Mind*) or to be bold for a moment, to help students ...*feel part of not apart from the wild world*. Wild journals ought to be part of the sensual experience that wilderness offers. Don't use them as a source for a grade ("Steve's journal is a C- because he drew too much and only focused on one thing. Leanna's is an A+ because she saw and recorded exactly what I saw!"). Wild journals are vehicles -- They help us move through time and space and hopefully into some wild mental and/or physical adventure or experience.

The *Wild Journal* Leader's Toolbox

Here are a few tips and ideas that may help you as you and your students journal in your place:

- **Be clear** on why you're choosing to commit students to wild journaling. You may need to explain what and why to parents, administrators, students, etc.
 - Know your objectives for wild journaling. These are not the kind of journal where you should expect black and white responses. Wild journals may be unruly, hard to understand, uncontrolled, messy... wild.

- Wild journaling generally takes place outdoors/out of the classroom or is at least related to some wild experience or topic. The freeing part of a wild journal is that imagination, creativity, emotion, and much more can be part of it.
- **Prompts** can be helpful for new wild journalers, but a wild journal should be open enough to allow each journal keeper to find *their* path.
 - Go slow, invest the time and help make the experience something less than a chore as they learn new information, acquire new skills, and develop new habits.
 - Older students, students who are well ingrained in the right answer/wrong answer, do it this way, don't go outside the lines approach may need to practice *letting go* as they develop the wild journal habit.
 - If you're going to use prompts they can be as simple and open as, "You have 10 minutes to record...", as direct as, "You should include a brief physical description of the leaf, a semi-detailed sketch and a statement that illustrates its smell ", or may fall somewhere between those two extremes.
 - Choose prompts that meet your students' needs. Adapt prompts as needed. See a list of possible prompts at the end of this handout.
 - Prompts can include a sketching/drawing element or may be just a visual recording with no writing at all.
- **Time** management is still important for the wild journal facilitator. While we may be really into what we're doing, the lunch staff may not be enamored with our tardiness for lunch. At the same time, when possible, if things are going well let the wild experience continue.
 - For new journal keepers, begin with short time periods and over time move to longer time commitments as students become more comfortable and adept at how to use their time wisely, creatively and efficiently.
 - Some students will be *finished* shortly after you begin. Use a directive like, "We're not finished until I call you!" and then hold students to that.
 - Reinforce often that *think time* and *feel time* is an important part of the wild journal process.
- The **teacher's role** during the wild journal period:
 - Write, draw and experience wildness at the same time as your students whenever possible.
 - Bring lots of extra (and pre-sharpened) pencils.
 - Be willing to share your journal so that students can see that you too are an evolving journalist.
 - Keep students physically close at first and expand their distance from you as they become more experienced and trusted.
- **Wild journal sharing:**
 - Keep it optional. Never use sharing punishment for less than

- perfect effort.
- Work out some method of acknowledging journaling and sharing that everyone participates in every time (i.e. clapping).
 - Provide plenty of positive feedback and avoid direct negative comments. Encourage wild, different approaches as long as it's not just messing around. You know your students so be honest about your feelings.

Wild Journal Prompt Ideas

Many teachers have a difficult time coming up with prompts at first. Here are a few to help stimulate your own creativity.

- Record as many smells as you can. Write, draw or do both.
- Stand in one place. Jot down any wild things you see to the north. Turn and do the same for each direction.
- Close your eyes for 30 seconds. Listen carefully and make a mental note of any wild sounds you hear. After 30 seconds, record them in your wild journal.
- Find something wild like a tree or some rocks. Take some time to explore it with your fingers. Describe it in your wild journal.
- Take a barefoot walk and feel the wildness of the ground. Share your observations in your wild journal.
- Take some time to explore this wild place. After you have a feel for it, write a wild short story (fiction or non-fiction) that could take place here.
- Tomorrow our day will be spent in the wild outdoors no matter what the weather. The day's weather forecast is written on the board. In each surrounding segment of a concept web list, write or draw how you should BE PREPARED for being outside if the wild forecast is accurate.
- On your next blank journal page make a DETAILED SKETCH of a swelling deciduous bud.
- On your next blank journal page draw a close-up view of something you can observe in wild nature right now.
- On your next blank journal page create a concept web, centered on one of today's observations of something wild, that shows things you know or have observed about it.
- Choose three wild natural items (at least 2 that you can actually observe) and describe them in as great of detail as you are able:
- Write a dialog between two naturalists as they discuss their daily observations as they move through wilderness.
- Create a field guide page based on one of today's observations. Be sure to include the common name, scientific name, other important information, and an illustration. Next, share your ideas about how wild places are need for its survival.

- On your next blank journal page draw or write about something wild in nature that you really love.
- Mythical lands can be magical, fun and exciting. They are often full of unusual animals, plants and even human-like creatures! They are often very wild! Draw a map of a mythical (made-up) land. Indicate where particular animals, plants and human-like creatures live. Show landforms like mountains, rivers, lakes and valleys are located. Be sure to name your mythical, magical, wild land.
- Write a poem based on one or more of your wild observations.
- Hawks are predators and ground squirrels are a favorite springtime prey of theirs. They are both wild. They must view a chase from very different POINTS OF VIEW! Write a script that shows both points of view during a wild chase. Be sure to show each animal's distinct POINT OF VIEW.
- Create a SHORT STORY featuring one of today's wild observations.
- Create a concept web to show (using pictures or words) what you LOVE ABOUT SPRING (or summer, fall , winter) and what you like about this season in the wild.
- Record your observations using two methods: Illustrate your observation(s) and then on the other side of the page, write a narrative that includes creative use of adjectives and a dialog between at least two people.
- Write a piece that expresses feeling or emotion about something observed today or recently in a wild place.
- Write an observational paragraph (at least 3 sentences) based on something observed in the wild today:
- Compose 5 or more questions based on one or more of today's wild observations.
- Compose 3 or more SIMILE SENTENCES based on one or more of today's observations.

