

Your local trees and forests

**Ages: 8 – 18****Time: Project**

Purpose: To investigate the trees, forests and woodlands that can be found in your local area. Learn and share the history and stories of these trees and think about what you can do to help protect them.

Curricular links

EXA 2-4-01a, 2,4-05a, 2-4-14a, **HWB** 2-4-12a, 2-4-13a, **LGL** 2-4-01a, 2-4-02a, 2-4-04a, 2-4-06a, 2-4-12a, 2-4-13a, **LIT** 2-4-02a, 2-4-05a, 2-4-06a, 2-4-09a, 2-4-10a, 2-4-20a, 2-4-21a, 2-4-22a, 2-4-23a, 2-4-24a, 2-4-25a, 2-4-26a, 2-4-28a, **ENG** 2-4-03a, 2-4-27a, 2-4-31a, **GAI** 2-4-02a, 2-4-03a, 2-4-27a, 2-4-31a, **RME** 2-4-02b, 2-4-05b, 2-4-07a, **SOC** 2-4-01a, 2-4-08a, 2-4-10a

Activity 1: Investigate your local trees and forests

Start by finding the trees and forests in your local area. These could include

- Individual trees
- Parks with trees
- Woodlands
- Temperate rainforests
- Underwater forests such as kelp forests or sea grass beds

Now you have identified your local trees and forests, think about what roles they provide. Which of the list of roles below apply to your local trees and forests? Can you think of any other roles your local trees and forests provide?

- **Ecological roles**
 - Support for biodiversity – over 80% of all land species are found in forests.
 - Trees improve air and water quality by filtering out pollution and chemicals.
 - Trees absorb and store a large amount of carbon, keeping it out of our atmosphere.
 - Forests made most of the soil on the planet and help improve soil quality.
 - Trees prevent flooding by stabilising the soil and preventing erosion.
- **Economic roles**
 - Forests provide food and fuel for over 1.6 billion people worldwide.
 - Forests provide jobs in extracting raw materials and managing forests for recreation and tourism.
- **Social roles**
 - Spending time in forests helps us connect with nature and each other, leading to improvements in mental health.
 - Lots of outdoor activities take place in forests, including walking and cycling, with benefits for our physical health.



- **Cultural roles**

- Forests are involved in many seasonal rituals.
- Forests are a great place to learn and be inspired.
- Forests are an important source of our heritage. A lot of history has happened in forests and there are many stories that they can tell us.
- Many spiritual and religious practices take place in forests.

To understand your local trees and forests fully, you need to get to know their history and place in your local community.

To do this, interview members of your local community about your local trees and forests. This could include family members and carers, neighbours, members of community groups or people who have lived in the local area for a long time. Ask them what memories they have of local trees or forest areas (including underwater forests if you have those nearby).

Some ideas for questions are:

- Do they remember when a specific tree was planted?
- Do they remember any rituals or celebrations involving trees and forests?
- Do they know any local stories or folklore to do with trees and forests?
- Are there any trees or forests that they remember that are no longer there? How do they feel about that?

Remember to listen carefully to those you are interviewing.

Stay curious during the interview. It's good to have some questions prepared in advance, but don't be afraid to ask about what interests you in the stories you are hearing.

You could record your audio (make sure you ask permission of the person you are interviewing first).

Activity 2: Tell the story of your local trees and forests

Now it's time to take all the things you learned during your investigation and turn them into something that can be shared with others.

- You could write a story or a poem.
- You could create an artwork.
- You could create a play.
- You could record your interviews and share them with others (if you are sharing online, make sure you have the permission of anyone who's image or voice you use before you share them).

Make sure you include the names of any people you interviewed as a thank you in whatever you produce. Share your creations at an assembly, on a noticeboard or online.

Extension: Protect your local trees and forests

Now you know the history and stories of your local trees and forests you can start to see how you are woven into the tapestry of your local area. Think about the connections that you have found with your local trees and forests and how important they are. How would it feel if your local trees and forests were no longer there. What would you lose?

Next, think about what you need to do to protect your local trees and forests. Is there any development planned in your local area that includes felling trees? Are there any plans to plant trees or restore forests locally that you could help with? Find what interests you and get involved.

