

Lesson Plan

Soil and Rocks

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Time Frame: 45-60 minutes

Objective: Teaching artist and students will get to know each other through a name game, collaborative writing, and movement exercise.

Prior Knowledge and Skills: None

Required Materials: Whiteboard and dry erase markers or poster board and Sharpie pens, puppet, *Everyone Needs a Rock* by Byrd Baylor, 1 small cup for each student, potted cactus or other local plant to share, a garden or outdoor space in which to hold the class

Sequence of Activities:

Introduction (15 minutes)

This class is best carried out in a garden or other outdoor space.

The class should sit in a circle on the ground. Introduces yourself by sharing your interests or a sample of your own writing/art that would be of interest to children. Introduce a puppet friend and explain that you and your puppet friend will go around and shake hands with everyone. Have each child share their name as you shake their hand.

When everyone is seated and listening, give the puppet a pencil and have it wave the pencil around and point to a child. The chosen child can share their name and a type of food they like (or a favorite color, favorite animal, etc.). Continue selecting children in this way until all have a chance to share.

Bring a small, local plant to share. Tell them the story of this plant: where did you find it, how did you plant it, how long have you had it, and how have you seen it grow? Since we'll be talking about soil, ask them to think of a few words to describe the soil of this plant. Mention that different plants need different kinds of soil. A cactus, for example, likes to be in dry, rocky soil. They can also think of a few words to describe the plant. Use questions like, "What does it feel/smell/look like?" Children can be assisted to carefully pass around the pot for a closer look.

Write on the board any words they use to describe the plant or soil.

Here are some great soil words if they need help: dry, moist, rocky, soft, hard.

Movement Exercise (10-15 minutes)

What would it be like to be a rock, far underneath the ground, in the soil? Use this yoga sequence to awaken their imagination:

Everyone stands tall with both feet on the ground. Feel a tickle going up your back and out the top of your head. Raise your hands above to catch it. Then reach down to the ground; feel the ground with your hands. Take a moment here and really touch the ground, even if it's wet and muddy! Play with it in your fingers. Touch rocks, or little pebbles, or take a handful of sand and let it fall slowly from your fingers. Then put your hands in front of you (downward dog). Lift one leg and put it down. Lift the other and put it down. Take a deep breath through your nose and let it out like a loud wind blowing. Lower your knees.

Now we are going to become a rock, deep beneath the ground. Slowly push back (child's pose) with your hands out in front of you. Then slide your hands along the ground and put them to your side. Tuck your head under and become a tight ball. Imagine that you are a rock. Imagine what it's like to be so far beneath the ground, with all the soil on top and around you, the worms wiggling beside you.

The teacher will count to 5, and in those 5 long seconds, everyone should be completely silent, imagining their life as a rock.

At the end, come up slowly and sit back in the circle.

Invite students to share what it was like to be a rock while you write their responses on the board. Use questions to help them provide you with more details. You can start a new line each time a new student speaks and write it as a poem, or write it as prose in one paragraph.

Sample poem from a kindergarten classroom:

Rock

Rain washed me
Sun made me dry and warm
I see ants
Slimy words beside me
Sinking under water
I turned into a rainbow, sun, water
I am a rainbow rock
The sand in my eyes
Slithered on by a snake
I am a small rock
Small as a baby cactus

Read a Book (10 minutes)

Read *Everyone Needs a Rock* by Byrd Baylor. Pause often to look close at the soil and rocks in the illustrations. Depending on the attention of your audience, read all or part of the book.

Find a Small Rock and Share (15 minutes)

Every child receives a small cup. They explore the garden (or outdoor space) in search of interesting soil or rocks. They should only pick one thing to put in their cup: a rock or a small pinch of soil. Then they should return to the circle to share their discoveries.

