

Use Non-fiction texts to research trees around school or local environment

Aim: Pupils learn about local trees and use this information in a visualisation exercise.

All the Pappus top 15 plants have ID guides, Fact Sheets, 'Trumps' cards and annotated photographs of the plants through the seasons. There is also a glossary on the website to help students to understand the technical language used. These non-fiction texts can be used by class groups to research a selected number of these top plants, perhaps focussing on those that you have growing in the grounds or locally.

Following this introductory research carry out the following exercise (and see additional springboards)

Relaxation / Information / Imagination

The following exercise is inspired by the Russian drama practitioner, Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). He was the first person in the Western World to write down a *Method* and *Technique* for actors, to help them create what he called a 'living life' on stage (we call this kind of acting 'naturalistic' – you'll see the word nature in there - and it's what many plays and films expect from their actors). In his book, *An Actor Prepares* he tells his student that he wants her to be 'the living life of a tree'. His student chose to be 'an age-old oak', but quickly said 'even though I have said it, I don't really believe it.' Stanislavski suggests that she says to herself 'I am I; but if I were an old oak, set in certain surrounding conditions, what would I do?'.

Activity:

Whole class works in teams to research a selection of trees/plants from the Pappus fact sheets. Then all groups sit quietly, eyes closed, (preferably outside.)

Teacher uses prompts such as:

- We are going to fill our imaginations with the life of a tree or plant.
- Choose a tree you have researched (or imagine one that you would like to know if this is a standalone exercise.)
- Visualise where you are (forest, mountain top, city street.)
- What do you see? (students don't answer but follow the instructions)
- What can you feel? (wind rustling your leaves; birds landing on your branches; your roots reach further for water)
- Who inhabits you? (Insects/birds)
- Home in on the detail of the landscape around you – is the fence made of wood or metal? Is there a stile to climb over? A gate with a latch and string to keep it closed?
- What can you hear? A bus going past? Pupils shouting? Police sirens? Waves crashing on rocks?
- Stay in your tree-self, and see, feel, hear as you can of the detail of the world around you, in your branches and in the soil at your roots.

Stay quiet for a few moments before moving on to another activity.

Resources:

Trees/plants in the grounds or locality
Pappus plant fact sheets

More springboards:

- See Literacy learning springboard - Conversation with a Tree.

Success Criteria:

- ✓ I can describe the age and stature of a tree in my location
- ✓ I can empathise with a living structure in my location

