

LITERACY learning springboards

Pappus

Language development and descriptive language – nettles

Scaffolding, using nettles as a model, to suggest a wide range of ambitious adjectives to describe a plant

Aim: To be able to observe plants closely and develop plant related adjectives to describe a character in fiction.

Activity

Pupils find a patch of nettles and carry out some close observation, using the Pappus Nettle fact sheet. Start by listing the features (leaf, flower, stalk, hair etc...) then turn the list into a list of adjectives:

- Leafy – lush
- Flowery – airy, light,
- Stalky – spindly
- Hairy – spikey

Encourage students to zoom in on smaller details. Pupils take a magnifier into the grounds to explore nettles. (NOTE: you may wish to use a visualiser to show the students the plant in detail as well). They will notice that the nettle leaves have serrated edges, like a saw, and will probably know that they are more often called stinging-nettles, you could enhance their learning by using key facts from the plant factsheets, for example their sting is sharpest and most poisonous in May.

Creative Writing Task

We often use the qualities and attributes of plants to describe human beings and human behaviour: “Hey, he was spikey; what do you think he’s so defensive about?” Ask the pupils to write a sentence for each of the qualities they have come up with from observing their plant or flower. Could they use metaphors and similes in their work (she was as sharp as a thorn, he was as fragile as a petal...). Depending on ability/ confidence of the students, this preliminary work could be developed into a descriptive piece based on a real or imagined person (a character from a text, a family member, a friend). You may wish to provide a teacher model first.

Extension task:

- Draw a character from a text you have studied as a plant and use plant-based adjectives to describe them. Images from the ‘flower fairies’ books could be used as inspiration, or look at Green Man mythology. Offer prompts such as a description of a character’s physical appearance (stalk-like legs, trunk of a body, wispy hair etc.) or their personality (she was prickly and coarse).

Resources:

- Nettles
- Magnifiers

More Springboards

Pappus Plant ID Nettle fact sheet

Success Criteria

- ✓ I can use increasingly ambitious (plant inspired) adjectives
- ✓ I can use a range of figurative devices (inspired by plants) to develop writing

