**Nature Journal Assignments**

The following prompts/activities should be used as bridge activities between the initial ecology classes and songwriting coursework. The goal of these prompts/activities is to inspire the students to observe their surroundings, their internal thoughts, and to find the connections between themselves and their environment. The more prompts/activities completed by the students, the more information and material they will have when put to the task of lyric writing for their original song about their city.

With Every Assignment students should write down:

* Date
* Time
* Location
* Weather
* **Walking Collections:** Collect three objects natural or manmade on your way to or from school. If possible tape them into your journal. In your journal attempt to describe all aspects of the item (DETAILS): its history (where did it come from, who/what made it, what was it used for, etc.), describe it physically (color, size, dimensions, odor, etc.), and write a brief description of how it is connected to your city’s ecosystem.
* **Leaves Same/Different**: Collect 4 leaves from one tree. Tape them into your journal. Study them with great detail and write down every little difference you see between each leaf. If possible discover what tree the leaves came from and write down any information you can find out about the tree.
* **Sound Map:** Sit in one location for at least 30 mins. This place can be indoors or outdoors, and document every sound you hear. Closing your eyes at points may help you to focus your attention on the little noises which surround you. You can also try placing an “X” in the center of the sheet of paper to represent yourself, and marking the location relative to yourself of where the sound came from.
* **Wildlife Observer:** Sit in one place for 30 minutes. Document the wildlife that comes in and out of your view. Look to the sky and look at the ground, the undersides of leaves, and so on--wildlife is all around you and comes in many shapes and sizes. Collect all the details you can about the wildlife which surrounds you. You can do this through sketches, descriptive words, photos or a combination of these.
* **A City of Many Survey:** Create a list of five questions about your city, which you would like to get other’s opinions on. Think about how everyone experiences the city in their own way. Think of questions which will help you to understand other people’s views of the city. Things to consider might be favorite natural areas, historical changes, best places for certain activities, ideas on what defines the city. Create your short survey, write the questions in your notebook, and conduct your survey with at least five other people. Make sure to record their name, their age, and the usual information of Date, Time, Location, and Weather.
* **People Watching:** Sit in a public place for at least 30 minutes. Observe the people who come in and out of your view. Make sketches of one item that stands out most about each person.
* **Water for All:** Find a place where water is present for organisms to use. This could be a lake, a pool, a fountain, a river or perhaps a drinking fountain, a sink, etc. Find a place where organisms can access water. Observe this space for 30 minutes and document what sort of organisms use the water and how they use it. Every detail is important.
* **Rubbings:** Find 5 different items from your neighborhood with different textures (leaves, bark, . Using a pencil, place the item underneath a sheet of paper in your journal, and rub the pencil over the top to transfer the texture to your journal. Under each rubbing, describe where you found the item, and and any other information to help describe the item.
* **Travel History:** Collect a series of objects from around the city. Put the items together, document where you found each item, and write a description of the story they tell.
* **Found Writing Utensils:** Experiment with as many different kinds of writing utensils as you can. You may use pieces of bark, dirt mixed with water, an old rusty nail, and so on. See how different items transform the page in new ways.
* **The Art of Trees:** Using items from a tree which have fallen to the ground, construct a small found art piece. Play with the many parts of the tree, the different shapes and textures. sketch or take a photo of your art piece. Leave it there for another explorer to find.