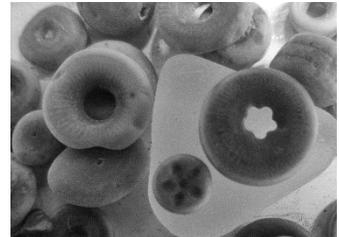
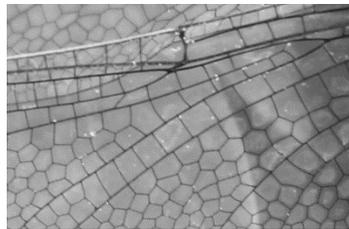
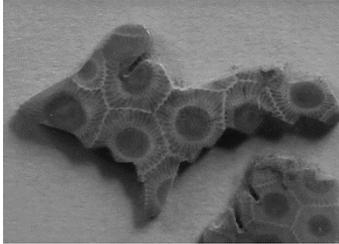


Connecting with Nature Through Shapes and Letters

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Walking forest trails strolling along riverbanks or ponds and even meandering through a field of prairie grass can be somewhat overwhelming for some students. It may be a place they never experienced before and have heard about the *'imminent dangers'* – wolves, bears, snakes, spiders, bats, and biting invertebrates. Those prior fears, biases and impressions can be difficult to overcome. This lesson intends address those difficulties and engage them by 'bridging' them into nature with something they already know.

Students, from an early age, are familiar with shapes and letters. This activity intends to have them focus specifically on finding those shapes or letters in everyday objects they will find in nature. By distracting them with an engaging activity, it will help overcome the reluctance and fear that some students may have in nature – AND reinforce curricular topics as well!

It takes patience and continuous observation to be effective. For young students, finding their name in letters or identifying a shape and drawing/labeling them in a journal may be sufficient. For older students, it may be a challenge for them to compile a set of photographs such as I have included here. As educators, you are encouraged to come up with your own ideas for your students.

- Reflections give a symmetrical image
- Ice forms surprising shapes
- Sycamore bark shed in the spring and early summer is excellent for letters
- Insect borers make wonderful letter patterns
- Rocks and fossils have many shapes and can have embedded letters
- Branches and leaf veins are great for E, F, L, V, and Y
- Leaf edges in close-up can be used to find the letters M, N, U, V and W
- The most difficult letters seem to be G, Q and R



A challenge for students might be to give relative point values to letters found in Nature. Below is a point scale that you might use in the classroom to have a classroom competition to see who can accumulate the most points:

A	3	H	5	O	2	V	3
B	5	I	2	P	7	W	5
C	3	J	5	Q	20	X	3
D	3	K	7	R	15	Y	3
E	2	L	2	S	5	Z	7
F	2	M	5	T	2		
G	10	N	5	U	3		

Alternately, this could also include lower case letters making it somewhat harder. A new relative point scale should be used in that case.

Literacy Resources:

- **Swirl By Swirl – Spirals in Nature** by Joyce Sidman
- **Sacred Geometry for Kids: Shapes in Nature** by Maria Lute and Dale Lute
- **Shapes in Nature: Learn Geometric Shapes** by Alina A Dumitrescu
- **ABCs in Nature (Everyday Alphabet)** by Daniel Nunn
- **Letters in Nature** by David A. Brigham
- **Discovering Nature's Alphabet** by Krystina Castella and Brian Boyl
- **ABCs of Nature** by Richard L. Scheffel