

Steinbeck institute project: How can we use narrative writing and techniques to tell the story of plants we care about.

Purpose: to design a series of lessons to help students develop skills in observing nature, working with narrative text on descriptions of place, and creating narratives describing their environments and their experience of those environments. This will weave in a project I currently do where students track the life cycle stages of plants in the school garden and how that is connected to climate and climate change.

Lesson 1 – Writings of place lesson ([student document here](#))

Except documents here

Students will examine excerpts of texts from Steinbeck on writing about place from Cannery Row, The Log from the Sea of Cortez, and Rachel Carson. Students will skim the readings and choose one reading to dive deeper into to prepare for a discussion on how to evoke the feeling of a place. Students will develop common understanding of what elements of writing contribute to a sense of place in narrative writing.

Lesson 2 Appreciation of nature project. [student directions here](#)

Students will use their previous analysis to develop a written, spoken, or visual narrative of an important outdoor place. This could be any outside space. -their yard, the walk to school, a park, a space outside at school, a bus stop, the grounds at school, the greenhouse. The only requirement is that it is outside. What do you appreciate about that space: students will create a narrative and then share in small groups with the opportunity for critique, revise and then make a last version to turn in.

Lesson 3: Phenology journaling project- After we complete some background on phenology and what it is students will choose a plant to track in the school garden. We will go out monthly and record quantitative and qualitative data for their plants and then write a paragraph about how the plant is experiencing the seasons. Literary works to reference to help students will include Robinson Jeffers, Dr. Robin Wall Kimmer. Students will turn in both the observations and the narrative each month of the year. Sometime during the year each student will create a botanical print of their plants they have chosen using a gelli mat printing process on fabric. (this will be put together as a quilt top at the end of the year) At the end of the year students will also complete a reflection on how this process has changed them and their understanding of nature.)

Celebration night! End of school year.

Class will have an open house to share the phenology narrative project with oral presentations, botanical prints, and families will be invited and students can share their work.