

# The Ancient Tree Hunt

## KS3 English

### Oracy/Reading/Drama: THE CHARACTERS OF TREES

#### ACTIVITY 1a: TEACHERS SHEET

##### Session aims:

This activity aims to raise awareness of woodland trees and their individual characteristics. This is explored through information cards and drama.

##### Starter

###### Options available to teacher:

- Either
1. Pupils sit in a circle and in turn, each names a tree  
**or**
  2. As a whole class, brainstorm names of trees known to pupils.

##### Main/development

Read through the information about trees on the student information cards together. Note that each tree has its own character; how could this be depicted in dramatic form?

Divide the class into six groups. Give one card to each group, keeping the allocation confidential. Ask each group to create a tableau which represents this tree and show each tableau in turn. The 'audience', ie the rest of the class, will try to identify which tree is shown.

##### Plenary

Teacher confirms the identity of each tree, highlighting the use of physical theatre, personification and symbolism where and if it appears in the tableaux. Pupils nominate and discuss one particularly strong tableau.

##### Curriculum links:

###### NC English Programme of study, 2008:

###### Oracy

Skills: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Range: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

##### Other Links:

Reading range: 1, 2, 3

##### Other Links:

Developing Communication Skills

Developing Thinking Skills

ESD&GC

PSE

##### Equipment needed:

Student information cards

##### Extension activity

Pupils choose a tree to research further for homework. Give students links to;

The Ancient Tree Hunt website

[www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk](http://www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk)

Fascinating tree facts [www.treeforall.org.uk/JoinIn/Hedgeandcopse/default.htm](http://www.treeforall.org.uk/JoinIn/Hedgeandcopse/default.htm) – click on *Fascinating facts*

British Trees website

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/britishtrees](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/britishtrees)



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### Oracy/Reading/Drama: THE CHARACTERS OF TREES

#### ACTIVITY 1b: TEACHERS SHEET

##### Session aims:

To explore the importance of a tree to a community. Pupils listen and respond constructively to others, present an argument and take on different roles.

##### Introduction

Teacher presents scenario: an oak tree believed to be over 400 years old is sited on a village green/local common land/park (teacher could select most appropriate site according to locality of the school). The oak is due to be felled because the council is widening the road through the village/town/city and the cheapest option is to use the space on which the oak is positioned, i.e. the village green or part of common land or park.

##### Activity

Discuss who and what would be affected by this proposal. If pupils struggle for ideas, suggestions from the teacher may include:

birds, squirrels (a drey in the tree), an owl, birds, insects, older residents with sentimental attachments, school children who collect acorns; residents who value it as a landmark or for its local heritage.

In pairs pupils prepare an argument against the destruction of the tree to take to a council meeting.

Role play protest meeting. Teacher could take on role of the Council, or there could be 2 or 3 students who may volunteer for this role. They should be briefed that road constructors have argued for the positioning of this road scheme on the grounds of cost. They may want to describe how they could compensate for the loss of the tree.

NB: Speaking/Listening rules for the classroom should be established and agreed by teacher and students prior to the role play discussion.

##### Curriculum links:

###### NC English Programme of study, 2008:

###### Oracy

Skills: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Range: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

##### Other Links:

Developing Communication Skills

Developing Thinking Skills

ESD&GC

PSE

##### Equipment needed:

Pens and paper

##### Extension activity

Discuss what forms of protest could grow out of the meeting. Further drama activities could focus on use of persuasive techniques and emotive language.

They may include:

- group protests with banners, posters and slogans;
- a march on council building;
- use of media - local newspaper, local radio;
- demonstrations;
- interviews with local radio;
- news item on regional television.

Badger Wood interactive game is designed for KS2 – but may be suitable for lower KS3

[www.naturedetectives.org.uk/play/games](http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/play/games)



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#### ACTIVITY 1a: STUDENT INFORMATION CARDS

### Oak

The oak is the 'king' of the wood. Many people regard it as the most important, noble and dignified tree. It is strong enough to endure gales, lives to 800 years or more and is also known as the 'father of the forest'. It grows slowly (about 3 cm each year) and has huge branches – great dark arms with crooked knots or elbows – which were used in shipbuilding and making strong furniture. The fruit of the oak is the acorn. Over 1,000 insects and grubs make their homes in the oak tree.

You might like to find out more about the Christmas traditions of the Yule Log and mistletoe which are both associated with the oak tree.



### Beech

The beech tree is often known as the 'mother of the forest'. It has thick covered branches which give shelter to younger trees struggling to live. This is a large, beautiful tree with wide, spreading branches which sweep downward, thickly covered in leaves. The beech tree has a smooth trunk. Its fruit, the beechnut, is eaten by squirrels, dormice, thrushes and deer. In autumn, the beech is a myriad of colours, of gold, red and orange.



### Birch

The birch is the daintiest and most fairy-like of all trees but it is also very hardy. It can live in places where the oak tree dies. It has delicate twigs and branches, tiny leaves and silvery white bark on its trunk. The birch lives to about 100 years old but it is not considered mature until it is 25. Some years ago birch twigs used to be bound in a bundle and used for 'birching': a beating which was a form of corporal punishment. Birch wood burns easily and is also used to make drums.



### Ash

The ash is known as the 'queen of the wood'. It has a very straight trunk and branches which spread out gracefully with the tips pointing to the sky. This gives the tree a round shape. Its roots spread out to a great distance. Ash wood is excellent for burning. Many years ago the ash was believed to have powers to heal the sick and there were stories of people and animals recovering from illness after touching an ash twig. Even today the ash is used in Chinese and herbal medicine.



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#### ACTIVITY 1A: STUDENT INFORMATION CARDS

**Holly** The holly tree is the most important evergreen. It grows to between 9 – 12 metres high and often grows under tall trees as well as in the open. At Christmas its dark green, polished, prickly leaves with red berries are used for decoration. The berries are eaten by birds and animals but are poisonous to humans. Legend has it that Robin Hood held meetings with his merry men under a holly tree in Sherwood Forest



**Elm** The elm is one of the tallest trees; a majestic tree which has suffered greatly from 'dutch elm disease'. This disease destroyed many elm trees in the 1970s. With the help of conservation and research into the disease, the elm is slowly recovering. The tree has a very rough trunk and branches are twisted, knotted and zig-zag in appearance. Cattle love to eat elm tree leaves.

