

**First Snowflake**

Having grown-up so close to the Rocky Mountains, and with my first degree a Bachelor of Ecotourism and Outdoor Leadership, I am very passionate about all things in relation to the outdoors. Due to this, I am constantly looking for ways to connect my students to the outside world. Nature is all around us, and I believe in harnessing place-based learning wherever possible, so students can learn through a hands-on, inquiry-based approach.

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| Resources used and possible concerns        | Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall by Leo Yerxa  |
| Author/creator and/or literature background | <p>Leo Yerxa (1947-2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- award-winning artist, poet, and writer</li> <li>- from Couchiching First Nation</li> </ul>  |
| UPE course connections (not exhaustive)     | <p>EDUC 435<br/>Literacy, Language and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During this lesson students listen and respond to literature, and then create their own response to temperature change focusing on prior knowledge of plants and animals found in the Canadian Wilds. Using the descriptive text found in Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall, students create an artistic representation for what they think animals might do to prepare for and survive winter. Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall is an example of literature that will help promote literacy learning in the classroom, as it has such rich text that will encourage great discussion and learning.</li> </ul> <p>EDUC 520<br/>Interdisciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall would be a great foundation for interdisciplinary learning. The rich, descriptive text not only paints a picture for the reader/ listener, but it also creates connection to the natural world, specifically during seasonal changes (autumn to winter). These connections can be explored through combined elements of Science, English Language Arts, Social Studies and even Art or Music!</li> </ul> <p>EDUC 530<br/>Indigenous Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall is written by a First Nation writer, poet and artist with content that is relevant to any child living in the Northern Hemisphere. This is a great resource to incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing in early elementary. This beautiful written story can be used to create discussion, as it is thought provoking - what happens to the world around us when it gets colder?</li> </ul> |

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| K- 12 connection   | <p>- Target age range: <b>Grades 1-2</b></p> <p><b>Grade 1</b><br/> Science; Seasonal Changes, Senses, Needs of Animals and Plants<br/> Social Studies; My World: Home, School and Community<br/> ELA; Explore thoughts and ideas, Respect and support others, Manage ideas and information</p> <p><b>Grade 2</b><br/> Science; Hot and Cold Temperature<br/> Social Studies; A Community in the Past<br/> ELA; Explore thoughts and ideas, Respect and support others, Manage ideas and information</p>   |
| Materials          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall</li> <li>- Chart paper</li> <li>- Plain White Paper for each student to make 2 pictures</li> <li>- Art supplies; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-crayons</li> <li>-pencil crayons</li> <li>-paints</li> <li>-textiles (scrap paper, fabric, tooth picks, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, etc.)</li> <li>-White glue</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| Rationale          | <p>Big idea: During this lesson students listen and respond to literature by creating their own response to temperature change for 1 of the animals discussed in the book (beaver, squirrel, deer, moose, mink, otter, fisher). Students first create a picture of one part of the story, and then create a second picture adding one of the animals (from above) with any added materials the student feels the animal might need to survive winter or cooling temperatures.</p> <p>Purpose:<br/> This lesson and book fit well into grades 1 and 2 Science, Social Studies and English Language Arts. By reading such a descriptive story about all the sounds found in nature, and creating connection to the story through previous students’ experiences (camping with family, or from a tv show, a walk outside, etc.) students will explore what happens when the seasons start to change</p> |
| Lesson/ activities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before reading Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall, have students sit in a circle on the floor and give a little talk about why this book is so special. Talk about how there were people who lived on the land that Canadians (and Americans) live on today. These people are the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI). FNMI people continue to live on these lands today, all though some of the landscapes might look a little different than they did hundreds of years ago. FNMI people learned from the land,</li> </ol>   |

and passed important information down through stories. Tell the students, “when we listen to this story, I want you to see if you can find anything important that the author might be trying to tell us”.

If possible, dim classroom lights, and ask students to make themselves comfortable before starting the book. Read Last Leaf First Snowflake to Fall.

The author Leo Yerxa, is from the Couchiching First Nation, which is in the province of Ontario. An award winning artist, poet and writer, Yerxa captures the essence of what is happening in the natural world when animals start to prepare for winter.

2. Discuss as a class, recording students’ thoughts on chart paper;
- I liked the part when...
  - I thought...
  - I wonder....

Include any other questions, thoughts, or comments that students may have.

3. Ask students to create a picture from one part of the story, using any combination of the materials listed above.

4. Once students finish their picture, ask them to create a second picture, but this time choosing an animal from the story. Ask the student to show how that animal would prepare for the cold to survive winter.

Animals discussed in the book are: beaver, squirrel, deer, moose, mink, otter, fisher (show pictures of animals so students can identify the name with the animal).

5. Once everyone has finished, it is time to share in a Talking Circle. Please refer to the *Talking Circle Fact Sheet* listed below in Sources. Everyone’s ideas are important so students should be encouraged to be respectful when listening as students one by one share what animal they picked (and why), and then explain how they believe that animal would survive the cold.

**Additional\*** For added story enrichment, take students on an outside “nature walk” around the community or school field before reading the story. Have students listen for the cracking of twigs under their feet as they walk, and for other sounds, smells, etc. while moving outside.

Sources:

Learn Alberta. (n.d.). *Facilitated Conversations Talking Circle: Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from [https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/facilitated\\_talking\\_Circle\\_fact\\_sheet.html](https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/talkingtogether/facilitated_talking_Circle_fact_sheet.html)

Yerxa, L. (1993). *Last Leaf First Snowflake To Fall*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books.