



## The Colours of Nature

**Age:** Grades 1-7

### **Lesson Plan Two:** Blue Trees

**Objective:** To create awareness for nature in your community, neighbourhood or schoolyard. To discover that nature can be found in small places as well as big ones, in urban settings and in the suburbs.

**Background:** My friend Kon Dimopoulos, who was the subject of the Blue Trees film, chose the colour blue to paint his trees to bring awareness to global deforestation because he says it reminded him of the colour a human being might turn if they were deprived of oxygen. He wanted people to associate this colour with a lack of oxygen in order to have us remember not to deprive our forests of what they need to breathe and to survive. Blue isn't typically a colour we find in trees, except for a few exceptions like the blue spruce. Usually people do the opposite of what Kon did – they name a colour based on a colour in nature. Let's find out what I mean.

### **Activity:**

1. If you look really closely sometimes you'll notice how incredibly vivid the colours in nature can be – the orange on a monarch butterfly, the red on a sockeye salmon, the blue on a male peacock. Over the years I've noticed how many of my crayons, paints and pencil crayons have had names that have been inspired by nature. Names like sky blue, sunset orange, desert sand and wild strawberry. While visiting a hardware store recently, I found myself in the paint section and noticed how many paint chip samples had names attached to them that were also associated with objects in nature. There was salmon rose, forest green, woodlawn gray, raw earth and badger brown. See if you can use crayons or pencil crayons or better yet, paint store colour sample swatches for this activity.

Now get outside and try to find something in nature that closely resembles your paint colour swatch or crayon – maybe you discover a tree trunk, a plant or a bird. Make a list of what you find or take a photo with your cellphone or a classroom camera to record your findings. Alternatively, perhaps you'd rather find items in nature and create a list of your own original new colour names based on what you find for your own "box of crayons". See how creative you can get with your new colour names!



Students can work in pairs or groups or even individually if they prefer.

2. In the introduction to the film *Blue Trees*, I ask the question, what do you think of when you think of trees and my answer is strength, oxygen, beauty, life, growth, nature, and change. Using the area where you live or the outdoor spaces where you go to school, choose an object in nature (it could be one of the objects you chose to connect to your colour in the previous activity) and find three words that you might associate with that item. For example, you might find a four leaf clover in the grass and be reminded of luck, symmetry and farm pastures. Maybe the item you discover reminds you of a special person in your life or a memory or story or even a certain emotion. In that case, you could write down your thoughts about that item and why you associate it with a particular event or person or feeling.

**Challenge:** Can you think of a time when being outdoors changed your mood. Maybe it relaxed you or helped you to shift gears or distract you from something that was on your mind. If so, write about that experience and provide details of what happened when you spent time outdoors.