



## Nature Shadow Box

**Recommended: Kindergarten to Grade 4. Activity has indoor and outdoor components. Adult supervision recommended.**

**Purpose:** This activity fosters creative organization and play. It also serves as a great way to create and store memories for years to come.

### Materials:

- Several objects of choice gathered on nature walks (*interesting rocks, sticks that make neat shapes, good smelling pine needles, the tiniest pinecone, empty snail shell, etc.*)
- A vessel for display and/or storage (*picture frame, shoe box, retro wooden box, etc.*)
- Hot glue gun if you want your items affixed in one place

### How It Works:

**Step 1:** Go out on a nature walk, being sure that the student brings a small bag or backpack. While adventuring, allow the student to identify, observe, gather, and carry any items of interest. Items are best smaller than the size of your palm.

**Step 2:** When finished walking and returned home, give space for the student to unload their backpack. If they collected any interesting rocks, clean them off in a bowl of water to see how much cooler they look when wet. Unloading the backpack is part of the activity as it gives the student further time to explore and marvel at the items they found.

**Step 3:** There are many varieties of picture frame or wooden shelf shadow boxes, but any cardboard box will also do the trick! A cardboard box can be decorated (*pencil crayon, marker, paint, tissue paper, etc.*) if desired. As the student fills their shadow box they may want to tell you about each item and where they are placing it. This is great building blocks for spacial reasoning, design, and categorical organization.

\*If they want to place items permanently to create a picture out of the natural objects they found, this can be done with hot glue. Hot glue can also be used to attach googly eyes or stick arms to make small characters from the items.

**Step 4:** To help with consolidation skills, students can be assigned to write or draw what they like about each item (*what does makes them think of, why it is special, why they chose it over other items, include features like colour and texture, etc.*)

**Step 5:** Play again. Shadow boxes are a great pass time. Students can unpack and play, often coming up with imaginary characters and roles for the items. Students can be given tasks to sort

items based off colour, size, sense of value, five senses, etc., and rearranged countless times. If in a shoe box it can be brought on long car rides or other places for quiet entertainment.

Overtime they can keep collecting...adding more interesting natural or human-made items that they find and letting go of items that they outgrow or no longer have room for is another great lesson for recognizing sense of value, change in interests, and the ability to let go of something that was once special.

### **Additional:**

While shadow boxes can be a lifelong collection of memories they can also serve as time capsules. If, for example, you go on a special trip, collecting small items as you go and making a shadow box at home when the trip has finished can be a great keepsake. The student can write a story or draw a picture of the trip to serve as the background of the shadow box and notes can be made about each item collected and what they represent or remember about the special trip.

