Living or Nonliving?

Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activity Lesson Plans & Resources

Online Lesson Plans & Resources available on the Alabama Wildlife Federation website

By observing living and nonliving things in the outdoor classroom, students will examine these patterns and use them as evidence to distinguish between living and nonliving things.

Materials: Copies of **"**Living or Nonliving" Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activity Page, Clipboards & Pencils *Optional: Hand trowels (for digging) & magnifying glasses*

Duration: Introduction – 40 min. | Outdoor Exploration – 20 min. | Review – 20 min.

STEP 1: Engage through Discussion

The background information, chart, song and example questions below can be used to help introduce the topic, engage the students, and build a foundation to discuss the topic:

Background Information (online as a PDF)

A **living thing** is classified as alive because it needs energy to move, grow and change over time. Examples are plants (like grass, flowers, and trees) and animals (like birds, insects, and humans). Both plants and animals need food, water, and air in order to survive. They must eat, drink and breath to survive, or they will die. Plants can make their own food using sunlight, water and air, and they can get **nutrients** (food) from the soil through their roots. Animals obtain their food from plants and other animals. Most animals eat, drink and breathe using their mouths, while plants "drink" water and food through their roots, and they breathe through tiny holes on the underside of their leaves. If something that was living dies, you can refer to it as "**dead**" or "nonliving". Examples include a dead tree limb or a dead insect on the ground.

A **nonliving thing** does not move, grow or change over time by itself. It does not require food, water or air because it is not alive. If it does change, the change takes place due to outside forces such as rain causing a chair to rust or a student sharpening their pencil. Examples of nonliving things include natural resources like water, rocks, or air and manmade products such as furniture, peanut butter, or clothing.

"Living & Nonliving Characteristics" Chart (online as a PDF)

Create a chart with one heading and two columns on your white board or flipchart, and then ask the students to help you fill in the chart with living characteristics in the first column and nonliving characteristics in the second column. You can also put the chart below on the whiteboard and read the informational text together with your students. This will help the students look for patterns as evidence.

What Makes Something Living or Nonliving?	
Living Things	**Nonliving Things**
Move.	Do NOT move.
Grow.	Do NOT grow.
Change.	Do NOT change.
Need food and water.	Do NOT need food and water.
Breathe.	Do NOT breathe.
Make more of itself.	Do NOT make more of itself.

Example Discussion Questions & Answers (online as a PowerPoint or PDF)

Q: Are you alive? Are you living or nonliving thing?

A: *Yes, I am alive. I am a living thing.*

Q: Is a doll alive? Are you living or nonliving thing?

A: *No, it is not alive. It is a nonliving thing.*

Q: How do you know? What is the difference between you and a doll?

A: *We know that we are alive because we eat, breathe, and grow. A doll does not eat, breathe or grow. It is not alive.*

Q: Is a pencil alive? What is the difference between you and your pencil?

A: *No, a pencil is not alive. We know that we are alive because we move, grow, and change. A pencil does not move, grow or change unless we move it or change it (for example: by sharpening the pencil).*

Q: What does your pencil need to survive? What do you need to survive?

A: *A pencil does not need anything because it is not alive. It cannot die. We need water to drink, food to eat, and air to breath or we will die because we are alive.*

Q: How does a plant get the water, food and air that it needs to survive?

A: *Plants "drink" water and food through their roots, and they breathe through tiny holes on the underside of their leaves. They also make their food using energy from the sun*.

Q: Can we find any living things in our outdoor classroom? Can we find any nonliving things?

A: *We may find living things such as plants and animals, or non-living things such as benches or rocks.*

Living Things Song (Adapted from "Learner Classroom" - online as a PDF)

Reinforce the idea of living things by singing this song together to the tune of *Freres Jacques*.

It is living! It is living!
I know why! I know why!
It eats and breathes and grows.
It eats and breathes and grows.
It's alive! It's alive!

STEP 2: Explore with Literature

This book can be used to further explore the topic with your students:

- *What's Alive? (Let's Read & Find Out Science Series Level 1)* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (ISBN: 978-0064451321)

STEP 3: Explain using Technology

This video can be used to further explain the topic to your students:

- Sesame Street's "Who's Alive?" (3:15 min. video @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giWqEPNLtBo or use the link on the online lesson plans @ https://www.alabamawildlife.org/oc-activity-living-or-nonliving/

STEP 4: Elaborate with a Field Investigation in the Outdoor Classroom

Download the Free Activity Page from the AWF Field Investigation Living or Non-Living webpage

The Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activity Page(s) allow students to apply what they have learned as they investigate and record their real-world observations in their field journals. Before you go outside, don't forget to review the activity instructions and your Outdoor Classroom Rules:

- Activity Instructions for the Living or Non-Living observation page(s): Students will go to the outdoor classroom to look for one example of a living thing and one example of a nonliving thing, and they will answer questions about each to prove if they are living or nonliving.
- Example Outdoor Classroom Rules: The outdoor classroom is not a playground, so do not run and do not climb on anything. Remember that the outdoor classroom provides habitat (a home) for local wildlife, and you should not damage the local wildlife habitat. Therefore, do not pick up wildlife, plants, flowers or rocks. Also, do not feed wildlife.

Outdoor Classroom Activity Tip: If possible, let the children dig in the soil for animals such as worms, and give them magnifying glasses to use.

STEP 5: Review and Assess

Review and assess the students' observations and answers on their activity page(s). You can also use one or both of the following activities to review and assess your students' level of understanding:

(1) Living & Nonliving Scavenger Hunt (online as a Word Doc or PDF)
(2) Living or Nonliving Quiz. (online as a Word Doc or PDF)

Example living things that might be found in your outdoor classroom include plants such as grass, flowers, bushes and trees; or animals such as bugs/insects, worms, birds, etc. Nonliving things may include benches, rocks, lumber, bricks, water, buckets, shovels, etc.

Alabama Course of Study Standards for Kindergarten
Language Arts (2016)
9.) Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
10.) With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
17.) With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
32.) Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
35.) Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.
36.) Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.
Math (2016)
4.) Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities; connect counting to cardinality.
14.) Describe measurable attributes of objects such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object.
15.) Directly compare two objects, with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of" or "less of" the attribute, and describe the difference.
Science (2015)
3.) Distinguish between living and nonliving things and verify what living things need to survive (e.g., animals needing food, water, and air; plants needing nutrients, water, sunlight, and air).