SNOWFLAKE OBSERVATION & PHOTOGRAPHY

Observing snowflakes is a simple way to engage children with the wonder of winter. Primary students might simply observe and sketch snowflakes while upper elementary students might also classify and photograph them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Black construction paper or fabric (felt works well), cookie sheets, hand magnifying lenses, sketchbooks, digital cameras

PRIOR TO ACTIVITY

Read "Snowflake Bentley" by Jacqueline Briggs Martin to introduce students to the art of snowflake observation and photography. Print out the attached Snowflake key to help match and identify the flake you collect.

THE ACTIVITY

1. Line cookie sheets with black paper or fabric and go outside during a snowfall to collect flakes.
2. Observe individual flakes with a magnifying glass and sketch them in a journal. See if you can identify them using the snowflake identification key.
3. Photograph them on a macro setting and/or through a magnifying lens (this may take teamwork).

Applications: Science, Language Arts, and Art.

TIPS AND EXTENSIONS

- Store your materials in a cool place such as an outdoor shed or chill them an hour or two before this activity; this will keep flakes from melting as they are collected and observed.
• You may need to go out in several different snowfalls to find the largest and most perfect flakes possible. There are many kinds of snow and noticing that not all snowflakes are the same is a great investigation for students.
• With older students this may be a perfect tie-in to math lessons about geometry and prisms. What shapes do students notice in the snowflake crystals?

If you are interested in sharing your project’s results, or would like more ideas on teaching outside at your school, please contact FortWhyte Alive by email at education@fortwhyte.org.