

Early Childhood Education Program for *A Tree for Me*

Name of Activity: Matching Games, Trees and Animals

Students Participating; size of group:
Groups of 4 or 5 children (ideally) or larger, with a leader for each group

Lesson Goal: Learners will play two different matching games that will allow them to practice using and recognizing nature words and concepts that they learned during story time.

Learning Objectives/Skills: The learners will be able to:

- a) Learn new words as they are introduced to specific trees, leaves, animals and animal habitats.
- b) Engage in literacy related play by playing games that focus on the animals and trees mentioned in the book.
- c) Connect reading to their experiences as they learn about some of the animals that they see in their daily lives.

Environmental Adaptations, Time & Materials Needed: This activity can be adapted to almost any environment. Children will need a flat surface (table, tray, floor) for playing the games. You may choose to do both matching games in one session, or spread them over two sessions, doing the Tree and Leaf game on the day you read *A Tree for Me*, and the Animal Habitat Game on the day you read *In the Woods: Who's Been Here?*

The activities will take approximately **25 – 30 minutes** depending on students. The following materials will be needed:

- Sets of [Matching Cards: Tree Leaves to Trees](#)—one set per group. Optional: color and laminate the cards.
- Sets of pre-cut [Jigsaw Cards: Animal Habitats to Animals](#)—one set per group. Optional: color and laminate the cards.
- A copy of *A Tree for Me*. If you have already read that story to the children, do a re-reading together or read *In the Woods: Who's Been Here?*
- The [Animal Fact Sheet](#).
- Real pictures of all the trees and animals introduced in the games, and a collection of the tree leaves if possible. (Pictures can be found in the websites listed in [Resources](#).)
- Teacher-made posters showing the pictures and words for both games: the trees (**M**aple, **O**ak, **P**ine, **W**illow, **D**ogwood, **T**ulip Tree, **H**emlock, and **S**assafras) and animals (Monarch Butterfly, White-Tailed Deer, Red Fox, American Robin, Black Bear, Snowshoe Hare, Beaver, Ruffed Grouse, Opossum, and Woodchuck/Groundhog).
- Optional: extra sets of cards for children to color and take home to play with families.

Procedure/Description of the Activity:

1. Prepare the setting: Display the posters where all children can see at the story circle. Distribute matching game cards and jigsaw cards in each area where children will play the games.
2. Gather children and seat them for story time. Read the book *A Tree for Me* or *In the Woods: Who's Been Here?* Ask questions that will prepare them for the activity. For example, where do you think an opossum lives? What kind of tree do you think this might be? Do you know how we can know what a tree's name is?
3. Show children the posters of trees and animals. Tell them some of the trees and animals are very common and can be found in their community. Invite them to look closely at the pictures of animals and trees. Ask them if they have seen some of them. Share the information from the [Animal Fact Sheet](#). Encourage the children to learn the words with you by recognizing the first letter of each word. Then read through the chart, pointing to the words and emphasizing the first sound of the words as you say them. Ask the children to read after you. If there is time, allow each child to point

- to a tree or an animal and read it. Remember to praise them when they try.
4. Tell children that they will be playing two matching games and will use these tree and animal words in the games. Assign groups of children to the areas where they will be playing the games. Tell them to listen to the leader in the area to find out how the games work.
 5. Leaders in each area can ask children if they are ready for the matching games and show them how to match the tree leaves to [tree cards](#) as well as the animal habitats to [animal jigsaw cards](#).
 - a) Matching Cards: Tree Leaves to Trees. Mix the cards and lay them face up on the table. Have children take turns matching the leaves to the trees. Help them recognize the names of the trees by identifying the first letter of the each word. Once a pair is found matched, remove both cards from the pile. After one pair is matched, the next child takes a turn. Praise children for remembering and reading the names of the trees.
 - b) Jigsaw Cards: Animal Habitats to Animals. Mix the cards and lay them face up on the table. Have children take turns finding the two jigsaw pieces that match. Help children to remember the habitats each animal has. Praise children for remembering and using the correct words.
 6. When the games are finished, have children in each group show a pair or two of the tree and animal matches they have made. Encourage them to say the tree and animal's names and praise them. Optional: Tell them they can each choose a pair of the animals and a pair of the trees to take home and color if they like.

