



HOPE HUNT

GRADE: 2-5

TIME: 45-60 minutes

THEME: Environmental Learning

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Science, Language, Geography, Arts, Social-Emotional Learning

MATERIALS:

- Hope Hunt student observation sheet
- Clipboard or firm writing surface
- Pencil
- Crayons or coloured pencils
- Optional: magnifying glasses, tablets or cameras, field guides, binoculars, thermometers

LEARNING GOALS:

- practise close observation of their surroundings
- identify examples of cooperation, adaptation, regeneration and care
- gather evidence from an outdoor environment
- recognize relationships between living things and their surroundings
- notice how living things respond to seasonal and environmental change
- develop questions and explanations based on observations
- consider where they can find possibility and hope in the world around them
- identify ways people can contribute to positive change

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

After listening to elin kelsey's presentation, Hope Grows Outside: Finding Hope in a Changing World, students head outside to investigate how living things survive and respond within their environments.

Every organism experiences changing conditions and challenges, from finding food and shelter to conserving water, avoiding predators and preparing for seasonal change.

Students choose an organism or evidence of one to investigate closely. They look for structures, behaviours and relationships that might help it survive, while distinguishing between what they can observe directly and what they think might be happening.

The activity asks:

What can living things teach us about responding to challenges?

Students then consider how ideas found in nature might inspire human problem-solving and new possibilities.



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BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE:

After elin kelsey's presentation, ask: **What did you hear that made you think differently about hope?**

Explain that hope doesn't mean pretending everything is perfect or ignoring environmental challenges. Instead, we can practise noticing how living things respond, cooperate, recover and continue, as well as how people can contribute to positive change.

Tell students: Today we're going on a Hope Hunt. We're going to look closely at the world around us for evidence that shows us what is happening and what might be possible.

Introduce the four Hope Lenses:

Cooperation: Living things interacting with or depending on one another.

Students might notice:

- birds or other animals using the same habitat
- plants providing food or shelter
- insects interacting with plants
- organisms sharing a habitat
- people working together to care for an outdoor space

Ask:

- Who or what is connected?
- What does one provide for another?
- What might happen if one part of this relationship disappeared?

Adaptation: features or behaviours that help living things survive in their surroundings.

Students might notice:

- camouflage
- protective coverings
- animals finding food or shelter
- plants responding to available sunlight
- seeds designed to travel by wind or animals
- seasonal changes in plants
- animals preparing for colder weather

Ask:

- What conditions does this living thing experience?
- What feature or behaviour might help it?
- How is it responding to its surroundings?

Teacher note: Younger students may use *adaptation* to describe any response they notice. Use this as an opportunity to explore their thinking. With older students, you can begin distinguishing between an inherited adaptation and an individual behaviour or response.

Regeneration

Look for evidence of renewal, recovery or processes that make future life possible.

In October, students might notice:

- seeds, cones or nuts
- decomposition
- fallen leaves becoming part of the soil
- fungi breaking down organic material
- vegetation returning after disturbance
- an area recovering from damage
- plants that have produced seeds for another growing season
- signs that a habitat is recovering

Don't redirect students away from these discoveries.

Ask:

- What is changing?
- What is being broken down or renewed?
- What could make future growth possible?
- Can you find evidence of recovery?



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BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE: CONTINUED

Care

Look for evidence of living things or people supporting, protecting or nurturing life.

Students might notice:

- people caring for gardens or trees
- protected habitat
- animals caring for one another
- people removing litter
- a natural area being left undisturbed
- habitat restoration
- people maintaining a shared outdoor space

Ask:

- **Who or what is being cared for?**
- **What evidence of care can you find?**
- **What difference might that care make?**

We also receive many things from the places where we live and learn. Reciprocity invites us to think about what we can give back in return.

Ask:

- **What does this place provide for us?**
- **What do we receive from being here?**
- **How could we care for this place in return?**
- **Could caring sometimes mean leaving something alone?**

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Take students outside and give them meaningful time to explore.

Remind them: You don't have to travel far to find hope. Look closely.

Students can work independently, with a partner or in small groups.

Encourage them to use the four Hope Lenses as they investigate.

- **Look up:** What's happening in the trees, sky or air?
- **Look down:** What's happening in the soil, grass, fallen leaves or ground?
- **Look closely:** What can you see that you couldn't see from farther away?
- **Listen:** What sounds tell you that something is happening nearby?
- **Look for change:** What's moving, changing, decomposing, preparing or recovering?
- **Look for relationships:** What is connected to what?
- **Look for care:** Where can you find evidence of people or other living things supporting life?

Students can record their discoveries through:

- drawing
- photography
- mapping
- writing
- conversation

Encourage students to find evidence for their ideas rather than simply checking each lens off their list.

Supporting Students During the Hunt

If students are struggling to find something, encourage them to slow down rather than move farther.

Try asking:

- **Find one living thing. What's it doing?**
- **Choose one tree. What's happening around it?**
- **Look underneath a fallen leaf. What do you notice?**
- **Can you find something that is changing?**
- **Can you find two things that are connected?**
- **Can you find something preparing for the next season?**
- **Can you find evidence that someone cares about this place?**

Avoid immediately giving students the answer.

Instead ask: **What do you notice that makes you think that?**

The goal is to help students develop their own observations and explanations.



HOPE HUNT



TAKE IT OUTSIDE, CONTINUED

When Students Find a Problem

A Hope Hunt doesn't mean students should only look for positive things.

They may discover:

- litter
- damaged plants
- erosion
- habitat disturbance
- pollution
- unhealthy vegetation
- evidence of human impacts

Don't redirect students away from these discoveries.

Ask:

- **What did you notice?**
- **Why might this matter?**
- **Who or what could be affected?**
- **Is anyone already helping?**
- **Can you find evidence of anything responding to this challenge?**
- **What could people do?**

Help students explore the relationship between:

Challenge → Response → Possibility

Hope doesn't require ignoring the challenge. It asks what can happen next.

Choose One Sign of Hope

Before returning inside, ask each student or group to choose one observation they found particularly interesting.

Ask:

- **What did you notice?**
- **Which Hope Lens does it connect to?**
- **What evidence supports your idea?**
- **Could it fit under more than one lens?**
- **What does your observation make you wonder?**
- **Where do you see possibility?**

Students don't need to agree on the "correct" category. The conversation is more important than categorizing every observation perfectly.

For example, fallen leaves could connect to regeneration as they decompose and return nutrients to the soil, while the organisms involved in decomposition could lead to a discussion about relationships.

BACK INSIDE:

Bring students together and invite them to share one discovery.

Use sentence starters such as:

- I noticed...
- I was surprised by...
- I wondered...
- I found hope when...
- I could care for this place by...

Create a class Hope Hunt display with four sections:

Cooperation | Adaptation | Regeneration | Care

Add student observations, drawings or photographs.

As students add their discoveries, ask: Could this observation belong in more than one place?

Discuss the connections between the four lenses.

Then return to elin kelsey's presentation.

Ask: **After our Hope Hunt, has your idea of hope changed?**



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BACK INSIDE, CONTINUED:

Closing Message

Before leaving the activity, remind students: **Hope doesn't have to be big.**

In October, hope might look like:

- a seed waiting for another growing season
- leaves decomposing and returning nutrients to the soil
- an animal preparing for winter
- organisms sharing shelter
- a place beginning to recover
- people caring for a shared outdoor space
- someone taking action to help

When we look closely at what is happening around us, we can notice not only challenges, but also responses, relationships and possibilities.

Look closely. Hope grows outside.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THINKING:

Observation

- What did you notice?
- What exactly did you see or hear?
- What details stand out?
- What did you notice when you slowed down?

Relationships

- What is connected to what?
- Who or what depends on this?
- What does one living thing provide for another?
- What might change if one part disappeared?

Hope and Possibility

- Where did you find hope?
- What made this observation feel hopeful?
- What response did you notice?
- What possibilities do you see?
- What might happen if this continues?

Connecting Back to the Presentation

- What did you notice outside that reminded you of something elin talked about?
- Did you find hope somewhere unexpected?
- Can something be challenging and hopeful at the same time?
- What did you discover about how living things respond to change?
- What possibilities do you see now?

Evidence

- How do you know?
- What evidence supports your idea?
- What makes you think that?
- Could there be another explanation?

Change

- What is changing?
- What is preparing for the next season?
- What is decomposing or being renewed?
- What is recovering?
- What might happen next?

Action

- Where did you see evidence of care?
- Is anyone already helping?
- What could people do?
- What is one small action we could take?

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS:

Hope Map

Create a map of the outdoor area and mark where students found examples of:

Cooperation • Adaptation • Regeneration • Care

Ask: **Are there places where several kinds of hope overlap?**

Hope Photo Essay

Photograph discoveries and create captions explaining:

- What we noticed
- What our evidence tells us
- Where we see possibility



HOPE HUNT



OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS, CONTINUED:

Return Visit

Return to the same outdoor space later in the season.

Ask:

- **What's changed?**
- **What's stayed the same?**
- **Can you find evidence of something you predicted during your first visit?**

Hope Grows Here

Create a class display using student observations, drawings, photographs and reflections. Include the question: **Where do we see possibility?**

Take Action: Practising Reciprocity

Think about what this outdoor place gives or makes possible for us. Then consider how we might give something back through care. Choose one realistic way the class can contribute to caring for the outdoor place they explored. Before deciding what to do, ask:

- **What does this place actually need?**
- **Is someone already caring for it?**
- **How could we help rather than assume what is needed?**

ADAPTATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY:

Students don't need to travel far or move continuously to participate in a Hope Hunt. A single tree, garden, planter, patch of grass or small accessible outdoor area can provide many opportunities for investigation.

Consider:

- choosing an accessible observation area
- providing seated observation locations
- allowing students to investigate from one place
- using partners or small groups
- allowing drawing, speaking, photography or audio recording instead of writing
- providing visual cards representing the four Hope Lenses
- giving students one or two Hope Lenses to investigate rather than all four
- adapting sensory activities to individual needs
- providing a quieter observation location for students who find busy outdoor spaces overwhelming
- giving students additional observation and processing time

Where possible, adapt the outdoor experience so all learners can participate outside rather than replacing it with an indoor alternative.

TEACHER NOTE: TEACHING HOPE WITHOUT IGNORING THE CHALLENGE

The Hope Hunt isn't about finding reasons to ignore environmental challenges. It is about helping students develop the habit of looking closely enough to notice relationships, responses, resilience, renewal, care and possibility alongside those challenges.

When a student identifies a problem, resist the temptation to immediately turn the conversation toward something positive.

Instead, move through: **What did you notice?→ What evidence do you have?→ Why does it matter?→ How are living things or people responding?→ What could happen next?→ Where is there possibility?**

This creates a more meaningful understanding of hope than simply asking students to “look on the bright side.”



MY HOPE HUNT

LOOK • LISTEN • NOTICE • WONDER

NAME:

TODAY I AM A HOPE DETECTIVE!

I AM LOOKING FOR SMALL SIGNS OF HOPE OUTSIDE.

I FOUND COOPERATION!

I saw things working together.

- ☐ Animals
- ☐ Plants + animals
- ☐ People + nature
- ☐ Other

Draw what you found:

I FOUND ADAPTATION!

I saw something responding to its surroundings.

- ☐ A plant
- ☐ An animal
- ☐ Something else

Draw what you found:

I FOUND REGENERATION!

I saw something growing, changing or recovering.

- ☐ New growth
- ☐ A seed or seedling
- ☐ Decomposition
- ☐ Something recovering
- ☐ Something else

Draw what you found:

I FOUND CARE!

I saw something caring for something else.

- ☐ An animal caring for another animal
- ☐ A person caring for nature
- ☐ Nature helping another living thing
- ☐ Something else

Draw what you found:

I NOTICED...

Circle one:



Growing



Moving



Working together



Being cared for



Changing



Something surprising

Draw what you found:

I WONDER...

Draw or write something you are wondering about.

I CAN CARE FOR THIS PLACE BY...

Draw or write your idea:



MY HOPE HUNT

FINDING SIGNS OF HOPE OUTSIDE



NAME:

YOUR CHALLENGE

Go outside and look closely at the world around you.
Find evidence of:

Cooperation • Adaptation • Regeneration • Care

Remember: Hope does not have to be big or dramatic. Look for small signs of relationships, resilience, renewal and care.

COOPERATION!

Look for: Living things working together, interacting or depending on one another.
What did you observe?

What evidence supports your observation?

Who or what is connected?

ADAPTATION!

Look for: Features or behaviours that help living things respond to their surroundings.
What did you observe?

What challenge might this living thing face?

How might this feature or behaviour help?

REGENERATION!

Look for: Evidence of growth, renewal or recovery.

What did you observe?

What appears to be growing, changing or recovering?

What might happen next?

CARE

Look for: Examples of living things supporting, protecting or nurturing life..

What did you observe?

Who or what is being cared for?

How can you tell?

LOOK CLOSER

Choose one of your observations.

What did you notice?

What makes you think this is happening?

What questions does it raise?

CHALLENGE + POSSIBILITY

Did you notice an environmental challenge while you were outside?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

If yes:

What did you notice?

What impact might it have?

Did you find any evidence of a response, recovery or care?

What could people do to help?

MY BIGGEST DISCOVERY

The most interesting thing I noticed was:

Because:

WHERE DID YOU FIND HOPE?

What did you see that made you think about possibility, resilience, renewal, connection or care?

ONE QUESTION I AM LEAVING WITH

RECIPROCITY

What does this place give or provide to you?

What is one way you could give back or care for this place in return?

ONE ACTION I COULD TAKE

One thing I could do to care for this place is:

FINAL REFLECTION

Complete this sentence:

Before my Hope Hunt, I thought...

After my Hope Hunt, I am thinking...

Hope grows when...

Take what you noticed outside back into your learning.