

Unit VI: Remembrance and the Creation of Memory

Grade Level Range: 3-5

Time: 30-60 minutes

Lesson EVI-15: The Survivor Tree

Objective:

- Students will be able to explain why living plants and trees have become symbols of remembrance and memory.
- Students will be able to explain how a tree or other plant that survives a terrible tragedy or destructive event may become a symbol of hope to people as it eventually thrives and blooms again.

Key Terms:

Survivor

Horticulture

Furrowed

Nursery

Flora

Materials:

- New York Times blog entry of April 30, 2009,
<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/30/a-911-survivor-blossoms-in-the-bronx?pag>
or <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?a=242828&c=50209>
- Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/> click on the Photograph pdf

Activities/Procedures:

- Read aloud or have students read the story of the “survivor tree” as appropriate to your grade level. (Do not show them a photo of the tree at the time of this reading.)
- Ask, “Why was this tree selected among the other flora found at or near Ground Zero of the Twin Towers destruction of 9/11?”
- Discuss the general condition of the tree, describing its damage and its chance for survival and recovery.
- Show the class a photo of the tree at the time it was selected and moved to the Arthur Ross Nursery in Van Cortlandt Park.

- For 4th and 5th grade students:

Distribute copies of the Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives website.
Working individually or in pairs, have the students complete Steps 1 A & B, 2, and 3 A.

For 1st – 3rd grade students:

Ask students to describe what they see in the photo of the tree.
Do they think this tree had a chance to survive and grow?
how the second photograph of the tree as it appeared in May 2009.

- For the 4th and 5th grade students:

Have them complete a second work sheet answering the same questions.

For 1st-3rd grade students:

Ask what they think of the tree shown in the photo.

How has its appearance changed?

Would they recognize it as the same tree just by looking at the two photos?

Why did the workers at the nursery decide to plant narcissus around the tree when it was taken to the nursery in 2001?

Why did Ronaldo Vega begin to look for the tree? How was it lost? How was it re-discovered?

Where is the Tree Now?

Evidence of Understanding:

- The Callery pear tree is a beautiful tree but it is not unusual or rare.
Write a paragraph or a poem describing the tree and explaining why people wanted to save it as a “living memorial.” Have students create a drawing of the tree to accompany the written work.

Extension Activities: Taking Action and Giving Service:

- Research the flora at the plaza of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center.
- What are some of the other objects in and around the plaza?
- What do the flora and other objects symbolize?
- Read the poem, “*Trees*,” by Joyce Kilmer.
- Relate the words of the poem to the story of the “*9/11 Survivor Tree*.”
Why does flora hold such an important position in world cultures as a symbol of so many things—important events, memorials, and gifts?
- Research the poet Joyce Kilmer.
 - Prepare and present to the class a short presentation about his life and accomplishments, memorials that have been created in his honor, etc.
 - Visit the web sites below to gather information as well as other resource materials.
<http://www.poetry-archive.com/k/trees.html>
<http://www.westernncattractions.com/JKMF.htm>
- Research the Oklahoma Survivor Tree.
- Read about the Rowan tree, a Celtic symbol of resilience.
- Research the Living Memorial Project from US Forest Service
http://www.livingmemorialsproject.net/ABOUT/livingmem_greeningres2.htm
Is there one in your school’s community?
Can your students contribute to a community garden?