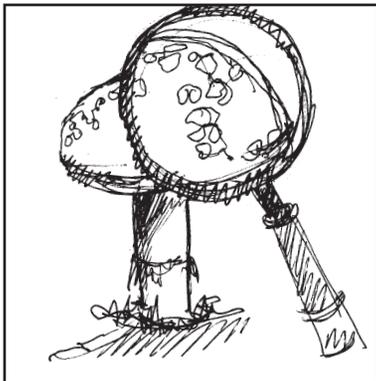


WORKSHEET 13

NOTES

Acknowledgements:

Adapted from original by Liz Holden and reproduced with thanks



MUSHROOM MURDER MYSTERY

This game illustrates different fungal lifestyles, and the various roles that fungi play in nature. It works well with both large and small groups, and a variety of ages.

You will need:

- Pictures of five fungal fruit bodies (including one parasite), stuck onto card. On the back of each card, write the name of the fungus and a few words of description (see suggestions below). Place the cards inside envelopes.
- Duplicate pictures of leaves from each of the affected trees. Stick one copy onto the front of the appropriate envelope, and the other onto card.
- Pictures of leaves from a variety of "bystander" trees, stuck onto card. Shuffle these with the duplicate leaves from the affected trees.

It is best to choose fungi with common names. Include the scientific names in brackets if you wish, but children can find these difficult to read aloud. Suggestions are:

Woolly Milk Cap (*Lactarius torminosus*) 'I help birch trees to grow and if my flesh is damaged it produces a milky liquid.'

Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) 'I am very good to eat and can help several different sorts of trees to grow, including Scots pine.'

Coral Spot Fungus (*Nectria cinnabarina*) 'I am those little hard pinkish-orange spots on dead twigs. I may be small but I am very good at breaking down and recycling hazel twigs.'

Wood Woolly Foot (*Collybia peronata*) 'I have a very woolly base to my stem and I am good at breaking down and recycling oak leaves.'

Wood Cauliflower (*Sparrasis crispa*) 'I attack the roots of larch trees and can actually kill the tree completely.'

What to do:

Pick five individuals (or small groups) to be the fungi. Give each of the other participants a picture of a leaf, and tell them to spread out around the room. Explain that many fungi can only live with a particular sort of tree or plant as trees have chemical defences to protect them from the "wrong" fungi. Today all the fungi will find a suitable food source, but one of the trees in the wood will die as a result! (It is helpful if you know who that person will be, as it is more effective if this is the last tree to identify itself).

Give each of the fungi an envelope, and send them off to find the appropriate tree with the matching leaf shape. When everyone is matched, go around the 'wood' and ask each fungus to read out its name and information. Explain what is happening in each relationship (e.g. exchange of mineral salts and sugars in the mycorrhizal fungi, recycling by the saprotroph). The parasitised larch tree can die quietly standing up or noisily on the floor depending on how much overacting you can induce! Make the point that its death is sad for the tree but important for the health of the woodland.