

# MICRO HIKE

## Activity 25

AGE LEVEL = 5-9 (10-12)

DURATION = 45-60 min.

LEARNING STATION = Forest, Field, Schoolyard

RELATED ACTIVITIES = None

WHEN =



**UNDERSTANDING:** Food, shelter, space and water are essential ingredients for large organisms (trees, elephants) as well as small (ants, mites).

### MATERIALS:

- A 20-foot length of string or yarn for every two students
- 8 Popsicle sticks for every two students
- Scrap paper
- Bug box or magnifying glass (optional)
- "Magic Dust" Pouch

**PREPARATION:** When looking for a suitable site, choose one with a diversity of ground cover, but avoid one with thick vegetation. Prepare sets of 20-foot sections of yarn and popsicle sticks for every two students.

### LESSON:

**Warm-up:** Have the children sit near the micro-hike site and imagine what the world would look like if they were only an inch tall. Have them think about how huge their school, house and parents would be.

Explain that there are many creatures and plants that are only an inch tall. Ask the children to find one where they are sitting. Share some of the findings. Explain that they will discover and explore the miniature, natural world.

Using guided imagery or a short fantasy trip, bring the children into the miniature world. Bring out your special "Magic Dust" pouch and explain that the magical dust will make them all small. Quietly tell the children to lie back and close their eyes. (The dust will not work if they peek.) As you spread the dust on them, speak quietly and slowly. Explain that they are getting smaller and smaller (use your creativity to set the scene).

Have them open their eyes slowly and examine the ground. What kinds of plants and animals can they see now? Slowly crawl to the micro-hike site, preparing the children for observing closely.

**Activity:** Ask the children if they've ever been on a nature trail. What did it look like? (A trail with markers.) Explain that they are going to build a nature trail, only with very small things. Provide a few examples (broken egg shell, ants, beetles, colored sand grains, etc.).

Divide the naturalists into pairs and give each the string (for the nature path) and popsicle sticks (for trail markers). Set a 40-yard radius boundary and send each group out (on hands and knees) to create their trail. Encourage them to think of a catchy title for their micro-hike trail (i.e. The Great Ant Parade). Note: With older children, you can have them write out a brief trail guide. Give them 15 minutes for trail making, reminding them they are only an inch tall. Supervise their work on hands and knees.

Have each pair lead the group down their trail on hands and knees, interpreting points of interest.  
Note: Magnifying glasses or bug boxes will help the children appreciate the uniqueness of each find.

Wrap-up: Snap your fingers. Suddenly, the children are full size. Briefly review the discoveries of the micro-hike trails. Ask: "What do these plants and animals need to live?" (Food, water, air, shelter, living space). How do they get these things? Did you like being small? What did you learn? Point out that small creatures meet their survival needs the same way large ones do.

#### OPTIONS AND FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

1. If it is raining out, do the micro-trail indoors. Run the trail along windows, floors, cobweb-filled corners, etc. Explore and discover the organisms that live in buildings. How do they meet their survival needs?
2. See Richard Headstrom's *Adventures with a Hand Lens*. This delightful book has a myriad of activities for young people and adults to take a closer look at nature.