

Plot Study

Introduction:

Connecting to the beauty and complexity of the world around us fosters a desire to become a better steward of creation. To understand creation better and appreciate it more, we must spend some time outside interacting with it. This study is designed to allow that interaction.

Getting Started:

Choose a spot of land very accessible to your home. The dimensions should be about 100 x 100 feet. Selection of your spot is important because the more varied and interesting your spot, the more interesting and rewarding your study will be. A good plot will have some woods, some field, and some water (a stream or pond is usually a great addition).

Note: Your plot should NOT be a residential backyard!

You should visit your plot a minimum of six times throughout the study, with each visit being at least one week apart so you can observe the seasonal changes. You must have two visits in August/September, two in October, and two in November.

Keep a digital journal or blog. Note: for security reasons, you should not use your full name to identify yourself as the author of this journal or blog.

Many of you will create some great journal/blog entries with this project, and you may want to save them, as more colleges and universities are requesting portfolio materials to determine admission. These types of projects would be excellent items to keep track of so that you can add them to admissions material, as necessary.

Basic Journal/Blog Guidelines

Include pictures and video along with your writing, specifically:

1. Maps:

- a. Turn in one map relating your plot to the local area: streets, highways, railroad tracks, and natural features such as streams, rivers, ponds, etc. You may use online map sites. Make sure your teacher will be able to identify the location of your site.

Due date:

- b. Make a second map of your plot showing its natural features: woods, fields, streams, large trees, etc. Maps must be to scale and have a direction marker. You may use Google Earth and label things, if your spot of land is clear enough. Post it to your blog or in your journal, clearly labeled. Do not include any identifying features (road names, etc.).

Due date:

2. Video:

Make a 30-second video that introduces a visitor to the spot of land you are observing. Post it to your Blog, or submit it with your journal. You should introduce and describe some of the key features of the spot. Include natural sounds and features that might not be noticed immediately.

Due date:

3. Field Notebook: Blog or journal your observations from each visit.

a. Observations should include:

- i. At least one photograph of the same spot each time—with you in at least one of these photos taken during the course of this project
- ii. Date and time
- iii. Present climate conditions (rain, snow, wind, etc.)
- iv. Temperature
- v. Length of day (easily accessible online)
- vi. Organisms smelled, felt, heard, seen, etc. (take photos and/or video of these organisms where possible)
- vii. Include any other data you took or impressions you had during the observation time

b. Note: Do not use the same location for your weekly photos as any other student.

c. Note: Visits must be at least a week apart with:

- i. Two in August/September
- ii. Two in October
- iii. Two in November

Be sure to email your instructor within 48 hours of your visit so that he or she can check in and give you feedback.

4. Reflections:

- a. List at least three wonder questions that relate to your plot (“I wonder why...?”). Explain for each why you find the question interesting.

- b. List at least three scientific questions that relate to your plot (i.e., “What is the pH level of the soil, and how is that affecting what grows here?”). After sharing these with your teacher and seeking input, investigate the answer to one of them and include an account of your investigation and its methods and results.

Please follow safety and responsibility guidelines, especially the following:

1. Do not study any non-public land your family does not own without obtaining permission.
2. Stay aware of hunting dates! If you are in an area where hunting is possible, wear orange even if hunting is not allowed on your plot.
3. Be sure someone knows where you are if you go out alone. It is recommended that you go out with one other person. (If you choose to share an area with another student and visit it together, be sure your journal photo locations and weekly observation spots are different.)

Key Due Dates:

_____ Maps, Video intro, First post

_____ All six visits must be finished and posted. (Post as you complete each visit, as posts will not be accepted later!) Remember to make your visit and post your observations one week apart.