Arbor Day – Celebrating Trees!

Subject: Visual Arts, Science
Grade Level: Grades K-5

Guided Instruction (To be done with teacher, parent, caregiver, older sibling, etc.)


Discuss the images by asking:

- What is going on in these pictures?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?
- Why do you think the artist chose to feature a tree prominently in their artwork?

National Arbor Day is an annual observance that celebrates the role of trees in our lives and promotes tree planting and care. First observed in 1872, this annual celebration is held on the third Friday of April – this Friday, April 24th!

Activities / Art Making

Head out into your yard or neighborhood and look closely at some trees. Pay attention to the textures in the bark, the patterns in the veins of the leaves, the colors, and the movement. If you are interested in identifying what type of tree you find, head over to The Arbor Day Foundation and use their handy online guide, What Tree is That?, available here: https://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/.

Sketching

Bring along a pencil or pen and a piece of paper. Focus on a small part of the tree that is visually interesting – a single leaf, an interesting knot, a cool pattern in the bark – and try to draw what you see larger than life. Be sure to include as many details as possible.

Leaf Rubbing

Find a tree with many available leaves and pull a few different ones off. Place a leaf under a piece of paper and use the side of a crayon or pencil to rub lightly over the paper. The pattern of the leaf’s veins will appear as darker lines on the paper. Experiment with different leaves, different colors, and layering of images.
(Left) Charles Burchfield, *Row of Maples*, 1916. Watercolor on paper, 20 x 13 15/16 inches (50.8 x 35.4 cm). Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC, USA. Bequest of Louise and Alvin Myerberg, 2010.3.5. © Charles Burchfield
