

Nature Mobiles

Subject: Visual Arts, Science

Grade Level: Grades K-5

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

View the photograph *Speak, Memory of Butterflies* by the artist Hong Lei – viewable on page 2 or online here: <https://sites.nasher.duke.edu/wordsandpictures/lesson-plan/life-cycle-of-butterflies/>

Discuss the image by asking:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

A **mobile** is a type of artwork created with elements that are able to move due to airflow around them. Artists like Alexander Calder are well known for their work creating mobiles. Many of us had a simple mobile hanging above our crib as babies or toddlers.

Activities / Art Making

With an adult, head out into your yard or neighborhood with a bag, or small box, and collect interesting natural objects that might be a great addition to your mobile. Look for a variety of objects to make your mobile interesting. Think about the way that different objects will move in relation to wind – a feather might move often with minor air movement, while a stone or acorn may not move much at all. You will also need to find at least one stick from which to suspend the rest of your natural treasures.

Tie a piece of string to the middle of your stick – the rest of your objects will be suspended from this stick. Tie string to the other objects (or you might use tape to attach string if necessary) and begin to tie them to the stick. You may need to move objects around in order to get your mobile to balance. Once you have your mobile complete you can hang it in your house, on your porch, or in a tree for others to enjoy!

Research

Now that your mobile is complete, it is a great opportunity to gather information on the natural materials you found! Choose one item to start with and make a record of your observations: Is the item from a plant, animal, or mineral (like a stone)? What colors do you see? Is it heavy or lightweight? Describe the texture.

Now that you have recorded your observations – see what you can learn about one or more of the objects. For example, what kind of tree did that leaf come from? What will this seedpod grow into? What type of rock is this?



Hong Lee, (Right) *Speak, Memory of Butterflies* and (Left) *Speak, Memory of Pomegranate*, both 2005. Chromogenic prints, 37 1/8 x 47 1/8 inches (94.3 x 119.7 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA. Museum Purchase, 2007.2.1.6. © Hong Lei

Examples:

