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**SOCIETY OF
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FORESTERS**
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U.S. Endowment
for Forestry and Communities

FORESTS OF THE FIRST STEWARDS

6th -8th Grade Discussion Guide

Episode/Lesson Plan Main Episode: Forests of the First Stewards

INTRODUCTION

Across this series, students have explored how forests are connected to history, culture, science, and the future.

In Episode 1, students learned about the historical relationship between the Menominee Nation and their forest, and how cultural values have guided long-term stewardship of the land.

In Episode 2, students examined how forests are actively managed through systems such as sustainable harvesting and fire management, and how these systems support both ecological health and community needs.

In Episode 3, students explored how forest resources are used to create cultural products, how knowledge is passed across generations, and how education and environmental observation support future stewardship.

In Episode 4, students learned how forestry education, research, and innovation prepare the next generation of professionals and contribute to sustainable solutions for forest management.

In this final capstone lesson, students will connect ideas across all four episodes to understand forests as interconnected systems shaped by people, knowledge, and time.

Learning Objectives (6-8)

1. Explain how forest history, management systems, cultural practices, and education are interconnected.
2. Construct and communicate a story that integrates forest history, management systems, cultural practices, and future pathways using evidence from the series.
3. Use evidence from multiple sources (episodes) to support claims about forest systems.





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Standards Alignment

1. NGSS (Science)

- a. MS-ESS3-3: Human impacts and environmental stewardship
- b. MS-LS2-1: Ecosystem interactions and resource relationships
- c. MS-ETS1-2: Evaluating systems and solutions

2. Common Core (ELA)

- a. RI.6-8.7: Integrating multimedia and visual information
- b. SL.6-8.1: Collaborative discussion using evidence
- c. SL.6-8.4: Presenting claims with reasoning

Lesson Time Estimate and Summary

(lesson time estimate 65 minutes)

Learning Objective	Activity	How Students Show They Learned	Time Estimate
Explain how forest history, management systems, cultural practices, and education are interconnected.	Watch the full episode of Forests of the First Stewards	Students describe how cultural values shape forest stewardship in the follow-up class discussion	24 min
Construct and communicate a story that integrates forest history, management systems, cultural practices, and future pathways using evidence from the series	Main activity of storytelling with #forestproud's theme "We Speak Forests"	Students create an evidence-based story to demonstrate their learning throughout this series	30 min
Use evidence from multiple sources (episodes) to support claims about forest systems	Closing reflection and discussion, linking the past four segments and this episode together	Students share and explain what they've learned throughout this series	10 min



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MASTER VOCABULARY

- 1. Silviculture:** The practice of managing and caring for forests to ensure their long-term health, growth, and sustainability.
- 2. Natural Regeneration:** The process by which a forest renews itself naturally through seeds, sprouts, or root growth without direct human planting.
- 3. Selection Harvest:** A forestry method where specific trees are carefully removed, often older or less healthy ones, while leaving the rest of the forest intact to promote continuous growth and diversity.
- 4. Maple Syrup Tapping:** The process of collecting sap from maple trees, which is then boiled down to produce maple syrup.
- 5. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** Knowledge developed by Indigenous communities over generations through direct relationship with the environment.
- 6. Selective Harvest:** The practice of carefully choosing individual trees to be cut while leaving the rest of the forest intact, helping maintain forest health, diversity, and long-term growth.
- 7. Sustainable Harvesting:** A method of managing forests so that trees can be harvested for products while still allowing the forest to regenerate and remain healthy over time.
- 8. Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE):** The organization responsible for managing the Menominee Forest's timber harvesting and processing operations in a way that supports both economic needs and long-term forest health.
- 9. Controlled Burn:** A planned and carefully managed fire used to reduce excess vegetation, improve forest health, and lower the risk of uncontrolled wildfires.
- 10. Slash Management:** The practice of managing leftover branches, leaves, and debris after harvesting to reduce fire risk and support forest regeneration.
- 11. Forest Fuel Load:** The amount of dry plant material (such as leaves, branches, and debris) on the forest floor that can feed a wildfire.
- 12. Sustainable Forestry:** Managing forests in a way that meets current human needs while ensuring the forest remains healthy and productive for future generations.
- 13. Forest Resources:** Materials that come from forests, such as wood, bark, plants, and fibers, that are used to create products or support ecosystems.
- 14. Cultural Craftsmanship:** The practice of creating items using traditional skills and techniques that are passed down through generations within a culture.
- 15. Basket Weaving:** The process of interlacing natural materials, such as plant fibers or wood strips, to create functional or decorative items.



16. Renewable Resource: A natural resource that can be replenished over time, such as trees in a sustainably managed forest.

17. Sustainable Development Institute (SDI): An educational program at the College of Menominee Nation that combines cultural knowledge and modern science to support sustainable practices and community development.

18. Phenology: The study of seasonal changes in plants and animals, such as leaf growth, flowering, and migration, and how these changes relate to environmental conditions.

19. Stewardship: The responsible care and management of natural resources to ensure their long-term health and sustainability.

20. Compostability: The ability of a material to break down naturally into non-toxic components that can return to the soil.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Menominee Forest represents a long-standing example of sustainable forestry that integrates cultural values, ecological understanding, and economic use of forest resources.

Across this series, students have explored how:

- Historical relationships with the land shape stewardship practices
- Forest systems such as harvesting and fire management support long-term health
- Cultural practices transform forest materials into meaningful products
- Education and research prepare future generations for forestry careers and innovation

Together, these elements show that forests are not isolated natural spaces, but interconnected systems influenced by people, knowledge, and decision-making across time.





LEARNING PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- Facilitate an open discussion:
 - What have we learned about forests across these four segments?
- Briefly introduce that this main episode ties the four segments together for one big picture story of the Menominee Nation and the Menominee Forest, how their people take care of the forest, and the forest takes care of their community through wood products, education, and sustainability.

2. Episode Screening: Watch the full 24-minute main episode of Forests of the First Stewards

- Make sure students take notes and have them focus on the overall story and themes from this episode.
- Main Activity: Forest Storytelling "We Speak Forests: #forestproud"
- Students use the power of storytelling to demonstrate learning and show evidence from across all four segments and the main episode.

3. Closing Reflection and Discussion

- Students and teacher(s) have a full classroom discussion on what they've learned from the last four episodes and the main episode tying these segments together.

ACTIVITIES

Main Activity: Forest Storytelling "We Speak Forests: #forestproud"

In this activity, students move from learning about forests to telling the story of forests.

- Objective: Synthesize learning from all four episodes by telling a story that connects forests, people, culture, and the future of forestry.
- Materials: Notes from previous segments, paper or notebook (optional: art supplies or digital tools)
- Prompt: What story do forests tell about people, and what story do people tell about forests?
- Directions:
 - Students create a short story that connects ideas across all four segments and the main episode:
 - Segment 1: History, culture, and relationship to forests
 - Segment 2: Forest systems and fire management
 - Segment 3: Forest products and education
 - Segment 4: Future careers and innovation
 - Students should include specific examples or ideas from the segments to support their story.
- Format options (teacher choice or student choice)
 - Short written narrative (3-4 paragraphs)
 - Visual story (poster or storyboard)
 - Verbal or video/photo story (1-2 minutes)





- Subject matter:
 - “Day in the life” presentation of:
 - A forester
 - A forestry student
 - A land steward
 - First-person perspective of:
 - A tree
 - A forest
 - A community member
- Student requirements:
 - At least 2 connections across the segments
 - At least 3 vocabulary terms
 - A clear idea of how forests connect to people, knowledge, and the future
- Can present with a partner or small group, or optional full class storytelling circle
- Teacher notes:
 - Encourage creativity, but guide students to have their stories grounded in real concepts from the episode.
 - The goal is evidence-based storytelling.

Closing Reflection and Discussion

Students reflect on how education, research, and innovation shape the future of forestry and connect back to earlier segments in the series.

Students may respond through written reflection, small group discussion, or whole-class sharing.

- Reflection prompts:
 1. How do education and research help improve the way forests are managed and used?
 2. How does this full episode tie together the big picture of what you learned in earlier segments about forest history, systems, and products?
 3. What connections do you see between forests, careers, and your own future opportunities?
- Discussion questions:
 1. How does forestry education prepare students for real-world careers?
 2. Why is scientific research important in forestry and environmental science?
 3. What kinds of careers are involved in forestry and sustainability today?
 4. How does this episode connect to earlier lessons in the series?
 5. Why is it important to combine education, science, and culture when studying forests?





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References

For additional information:

- <https://menominee-nsn.gov/CulturePages/BriefHistory>
- <https://www.menominee.edu/sustainable-development-institute>
- <https://www.mtewood.com/>

Additional Resources from LEAF: Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program:



LEAF-Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program
College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

- [Lesson 1: American Indians and the Forest](#)
- [Lesson 7: Sustaining Our Forests](#)
- [Career Profile - McKaylee Duquain](#)
- [Wisconsin Forest Tales](#)
- [K-1st Grade Field Enhancement - Sensing the Forest](#)
- [2nd-3rd Grade Field Enhancement - Observing Forest Interactions](#)
- [4th Grade Field Enhancement - Unlocking a Forest's Past](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Studying Forest Layers](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Woods Worth](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Competition in the Forest](#)