

Creating a Vocabulary Field Note for the Language of a Place

Just like nature field guides help us explore nature, vocabulary field notes help us explore words “in the wild.” We can use this concept inside the classroom to explore words. But we can also use it outside in our writing places to explore the language that can describe the world around us.

Procedure:

① Look at some nature field note mentor texts.

Do a quick Google search as a class to look at a couple of pages from nature field guides. Discuss what you notice.

② Today, we’re making a field note for our outdoor writing spots!

Take a look at the example field note at the end of this activity. In what ways is this different than the nature field guide you looked at? How is it doing similar work?

Guiding Questions for Field Guide Mentor Texts

- What do nature field guides have in them?
- What does a nature field guide do?
- If we were going to make our own nature field guide, what are some elements we would need to include?

③ Head outside to write!

④ Naturalist noticings (10-15 minutes)

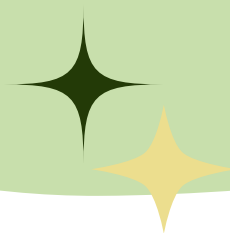
Sit outside silently and observe the world around you. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Write down what you observe as specifically as possible. You don’t want to simply say you hear a bird. How can you describe *this* bird at *this* place on *this* day?

⑤ Narrow it down. (3-4 minutes)

When time is up, look at your list of observations and choose 4-6 in which you are most interested.

⑥ Develop language.

Find or create words that are just-right fits to describe the elements you noticed. You could use existing language or, if no language exists to describe what you’ve seen, feel free to invent it!



7 Create your field note.

Your field note should include:

- A Title: A Field Guide to Name Your Writing Place on The Date.
- A part of speech and definition for each word.
- Any etymology of the word you find interesting (This might be a brief story about the word's origin)
- Images
- Anything else that would help someone better understand this particular place at this particular time.

Extensions

Here are a couple of ideas if you'd like to take this activity even further when you return to your classroom:

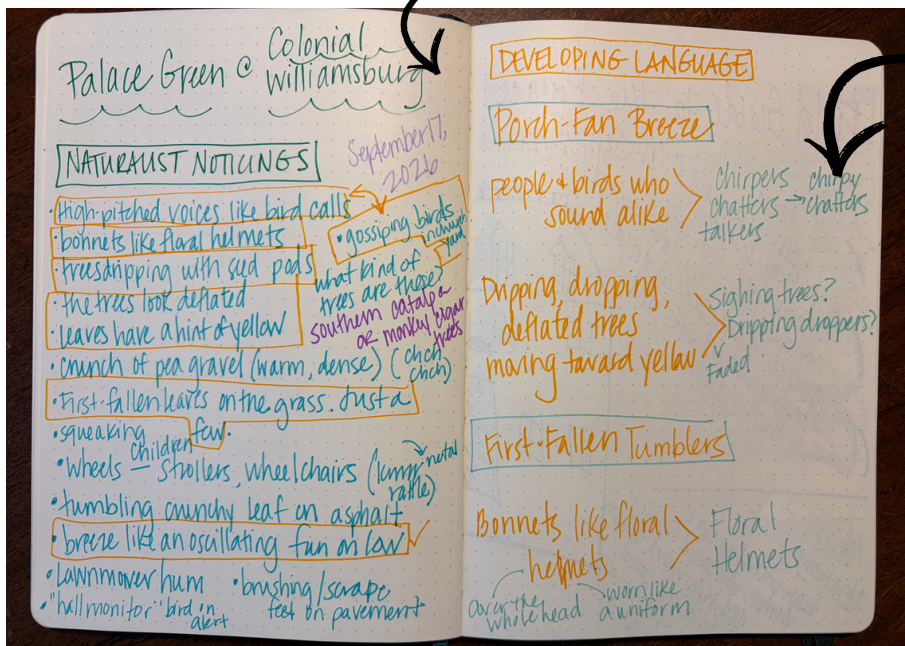
- Host a gallery walk of field notes. Debrief as a class:
 - What elements popped up in multiple field notes?
 - Was any similar language created or used?
 - What differences appear across field notes?
- Compile bits of language for a whole-class field guide to your outdoor writing location.
- Return to this same writing location on different days or in different seasons. Repeat this activity and compare the field notes. How does this location change over time? What remains the same?

Examples

Note the date + location!

Naturalist Noticings

- It's just a list!
- Noticed items are specific vs. general
- After 10-15 minutes of noticing, I selected my most-interesting, favorite 5 or 6

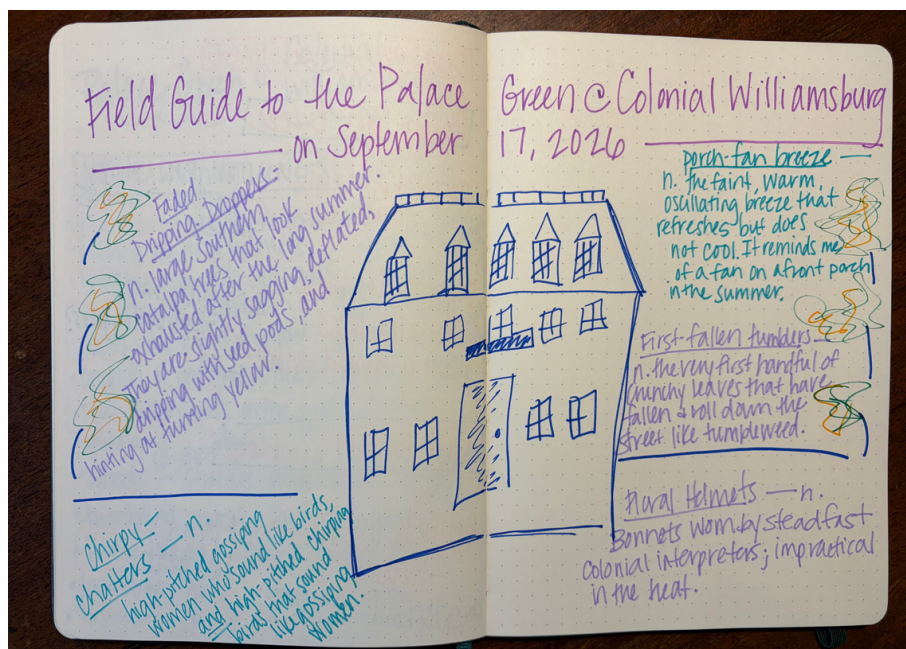


Developing Language

- You can see that some terms came to me right away, and others required some brainstorming.
- There aren't any rights or wrongs here. It's just playing around with language!

Field Note

- Words
- Parts of speech
- Definitions that are specific to this place at this time.
- Images



Title of Place + Date