

## Curricular Connections

### *The Three Red Witches and the Cranberry Bog*

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#### Place-based Ecology, Natural History, and Folklore:

Cranberries are native to both North America and Europe but are described as different species in these locations. Cranberries thrive in wetlands that are flooded once a year and cohabitate space with peat moss, pitcher plants, sundew, bog rosemary, and many others. They grow on a vine that loves sandy wet soils. It is thought that Europeans called cranberries “craneberries” when they first colonized North America because the flowers of the plant look like crane’s bills. Over time the name changed to cranberries. Many birds enjoy eating cranberries: red wing blackbirds, wrens, blue birds, blue jay, chickadees and woodpeckers among many others! Also, blackbears, rodents, deer and foxes like to graze on cranberries when they are in season in the Autumn. Cranberries are a delightful wild edible for humans as well and can be used as both food and medicine. They are packed with Vit C and antioxidants.

#### Explore:

- If you have wetlands or bogs in your region see if you can find a suitable trail to explore them and look for cranberries. (Wetlands are fragile ecosystems so stay on the trail provided). Watch what animals come to eat them, observe where they grow, and who they are growing with. Sketch them at different times of year when they are in flower or bearing fruit.
- Gather or purchase cranberries to make a natural dye. Boil them in water and dye muslin cloth or yarn.
- Cut a cranberry in half as a cross section and make prints of the four-petaled shape within!
- Try some cranberry recipes! (make sure that if you are wild harvesting that you identify the fruit correctly and that you only take what you need and leave the rest.)
- Read *A New Coat for Anna* by Harriet Ziefers as an additional story!

#### Reflect and Share:

- What is a witch and why do you think so? What did you think of the Three Red Witches and their personalities and actions?
- If you were a witch of some sort looking after the earth what ecosystem would you choose? A forest, a jungle, a meadow, a river, a mountain summit, ect? Who would be your plant ally and special bird friend? Draw or write about this in addition to sharing orally.
- Older children could research the Witch Trials and traditional women healers of Europe to learn more about this history.
- What is your favorite cranberry recipe? Can you make up a recipe yourself?

#### Photos:

