

Hazel and Huckleberry Learn How to Build a Fire

Place-based Ecology and Natural History:

This story is easily adapted to your place, audience, and season. Just change the details about weather, clothing, and animal sightings. I have told a summer version as well as a winter version and in as different settings as a farm school and a public school. That's the beauty of oral storytelling! It is fluid and can morph wherever you go. The winter story invites listeners to think more about what clothes to wear outdoors in cold weather, what supplies to have on hand for an adventure, and how fun it can be to find a giant tree in the forest. It also introduces basic fire building skills* including what you need to build a fire: fuel, heat, oxygen, and what types of fuel are appropriate to gather. It teaches a fire song, and suggests that pine needle tea is a great beverage to drink in the snow!

** Only explore fire building skills with permission from those in authority including administrators and landowners, etc. and only if you have experience doing this activity safely.*

Explore:

- Practice gathering the various sizes of fuel mentioned in the story
- Practice building a fire but not lighting it yet
- Make a risk-benefit assessment for building fires
- Make pine needle tea (opt. in thermos with hot water)
- Pack for an adventure in the forest and go looking for something like a landmark or animal home.
- Make a “fairy instrument” out of natural materials outdoors
- Make up a game about fire building
- Make up your own story about where fire came from originally

Reflect and Share:

- What would you do if you were stuck outside in a storm?
- Students share stories about campfire experiences they have had in the past
- Reflect on the safest place to have a fire in your outdoor classroom or space: consider soil type, wind directions, tree cover, water sources, space for amount of people, etc.
- If you were lost in the forest, what magical creature or animal guide would you want to show you the way to warmth and safety?

Photos:

