Activities

The Magic School Bus Makes a Stink

Grades: 3–5

Overview
Children identify smells and judge pungency by sensing smells from different distances.

Field Trip Notes
Flora Whiff, the famous expert on smell - whose nose knows - comes to school to judge the First Annual Smell Search. Ms. Frizzle’s class creates a unique smell that is bound to take first prize, but Janet, determined to win herself, changes their smell to an odor only a skunk could love. The kids discover the secret to what makes things smell. Now can they find a way to make sure their creation doesn’t make a big stink?
A Nosey One
Time: 20 minutes
Group Size: 4-6
Ms. Frizzle’s class explores Janet’s nose to learn how we smell. Your kids investigate how well their own odor detectors can identify smells.

What You Need
• 4 plastic film canisters, plus 1 for each group
• 4 objects with strong odors
• Hole punch
• Copies of ODOR DETECTIVES page

Talk About It
Ask: What smells can you identify?

What To Do
1) Number the canisters. Punch a hole in each lid.
2) Put a strong-smelling object in each canister. Some ideas: cotton balls soaked with perfume, ammonia, spices, citrus peel, soap, toothpaste, coffee, tea, pencil shavings, flavored breakfast cereals, pizza.
3) Tell students to sniff gently. Caution them not to touch lids with their noses.
4) Rotate the canisters among groups for identification and response to the odor. Ask: Do odors send a message to you? What are some signals these odors send to you?
5) Let each group create an odor challenge for the others. Ask: How did you choose your odor?

Next Stop
Ask: Do smells need time to travel from the source to your nose? Group kids at the back of the room. Uncap a mystery bottle of perfume or aftershave. Time how long it takes kids to detect the odor.
ODOR DETECTIVES

How good is your odor detector? Identify objects from their smell alone!

Mystery Smells

What to Do:
1. Take a whiff of each mystery smell. What is it? Write its identity.
2. What signal does the odor send you? Draw a line from the odor to its signal. Write in signals not shown.

Odor Detective

1. Select a strong-smelling object for other groups to identify. Put a small sample in the film canister.
2. Guess other groups' mystery smells. Write your answer on the back. Are you a good Odor Detective?

Take-Home Challenge:
Who has the best and fastest nose in your family? Gather your family in one room while a meal is cooking. Time how long it takes each of you to smell and identify the foods. Can you stump everyone with a mystery food?