

UM Printables Presents

Charlotte Mason Nature Study Journal

Grades K – 6 • Full Year (36 Weeks)

- ◆ 36-Week Guided Nature Journal
- ◆ Seasonal Observations & Scientific Sketching
- ◆ Nature Vocabulary & Field Notebook Practice
- ◆ Observation Guide for Parents & Teachers
- ◆ Seasonal Vocabulary Cards (Printable)
- ◆ Field Sketch Practice Pages
- ◆ Nature Connections Reading List

In the Charlotte Mason Tradition

UM Printables

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Introduction

Welcome to the Charlotte Mason Nature Study Journal! This 36-week resource is designed to guide your family through a full year of nature observation, scientific sketching, vocabulary building, and field notebook practice — all grounded in the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason.

Charlotte Mason believed that children should spend generous time outdoors, developing a personal relationship with the natural world. She advocated for short, focused observation lessons followed by narration — the child's own retelling of what they noticed. This journal makes that practice easy and meaningful for families homeschooling children in Grades K through 6.

How to Use This Journal

Weekly Rhythm: Each week, read the Guiding Question aloud and spend time outdoors looking for the items in the “Look For” list. There is no need to find every item — the list is a springboard for curiosity.

Nature Sketch: Encourage your child to draw what they observe. In the Charlotte Mason tradition, the goal is careful observation, not artistic perfection. Praise effort and attention to detail.

Vocabulary: Each week introduces one nature word. Discuss it, use it in sentences, and help your child make it their own.

Activity: A hands-on activity extends the week's study. Adapt as needed for your child's age and your local environment.

Written Narration: Younger children may dictate to a parent; older children should write in their own words. Narration builds comprehension and personal connection.

Nature Connections: This space invites children to link their observation to a book, a memory, or another discovery — building the habit of relational thinking.

Adapting for Multiple Ages

This journal is designed for the whole family. Kindergartners may sketch and dictate a single sentence, while sixth graders write detailed narrations and label their sketches with scientific terminology. The Guiding Questions and Look For lists work at every level — the depth of response simply increases with age. Use the vocabulary cards and reading list to extend learning for older students.

Observation Guide

For Parents & Teachers

Charlotte Mason wrote, “The child who does not love the various things he sees and hears when he is out, who does not like to have a nest of ants or a wasp’s nest to watch, is abnormal.” Nature study, in her philosophy, is not about memorizing facts — it is about building the habit of attention and the love of creation.

The Five Senses Approach

See: What colors, shapes, patterns, and movements do you notice? Train the eye to observe detail before reaching for a pencil.

Hear: Close your eyes for 30 seconds. What sounds can you identify? Birds, wind, water, insects? Direction and distance?

Touch: Feel the bark, the leaf, the soil. Is it rough or smooth, warm or cool, wet or dry? Never touch unknown plants or animals.

Smell: Breathe in. What does the air smell like? Crush a leaf gently. Does the scent change? After rain, notice the petrichor.

Taste: Only with adult permission and proper identification. Taste a safe herb or berry. What flavor words come to mind?

Tips for Scientific Sketching

- Look carefully before you begin to draw. Spend at least one full minute just observing.
- Draw what you actually see, not what you think it should look like.
- Use light lines at first, then add detail and darker lines where needed.
- Label your sketch: date, location, and any parts you can name.
- It is perfectly fine to draw the same thing more than once. Each time you will notice more.
- Color adds information. If possible, use colored pencils to capture what you observe.

Building the Habit of Attention

Mason urged that short, focused lessons build the habit of attention better than long, wandering sessions. Aim for 15–30 minutes of outdoor observation per session, with sketching and narration following indoors if needed. Consistency matters more than duration — a weekly rhythm builds a lasting habit.

Seasonal Considerations

- “Fall” weeks (1–9) assume a Northern Hemisphere autumn schedule. Adjust topics if your local season differs.
- Winter weeks (10–18) include indoor options for harsh weather. Even a window observation counts.
- Spring weeks (19–27) focus on renewal and growth. If spring arrives late in your area, revisit winter topics or fast-forward.
- Summer weeks (28–36) celebrate full life and long days. Evening observations are encouraged for nocturnal topics.

Materials to Have on Hand

- This journal and a pencil (or colored pencils)
- A magnifying glass for close observation
- A small container for temporary specimen collection (always release)
- Field guides for your local area (birds, wildflowers, trees, insects)
- A blanket for sitting outdoors comfortably

Autumn Leaves & Color Change

Date: _____

Location: _____

Weather: _____

Guiding Question:

Why do leaves change color in autumn?

Look For:

- Leaves of different colors on the same tree
- A leaf that is half green and half yellow or red
- Fallen leaves on the ground in many colors
- The veins in a leaf and their color

Word of the Week

Chlorophyll

The green pigment in leaves that helps plants make food from sunlight.

Nature Sketch:

Sketch a leaf showing its colors changing. Label the parts: stem, veins, edges.

Sketch here...

Field Notes:

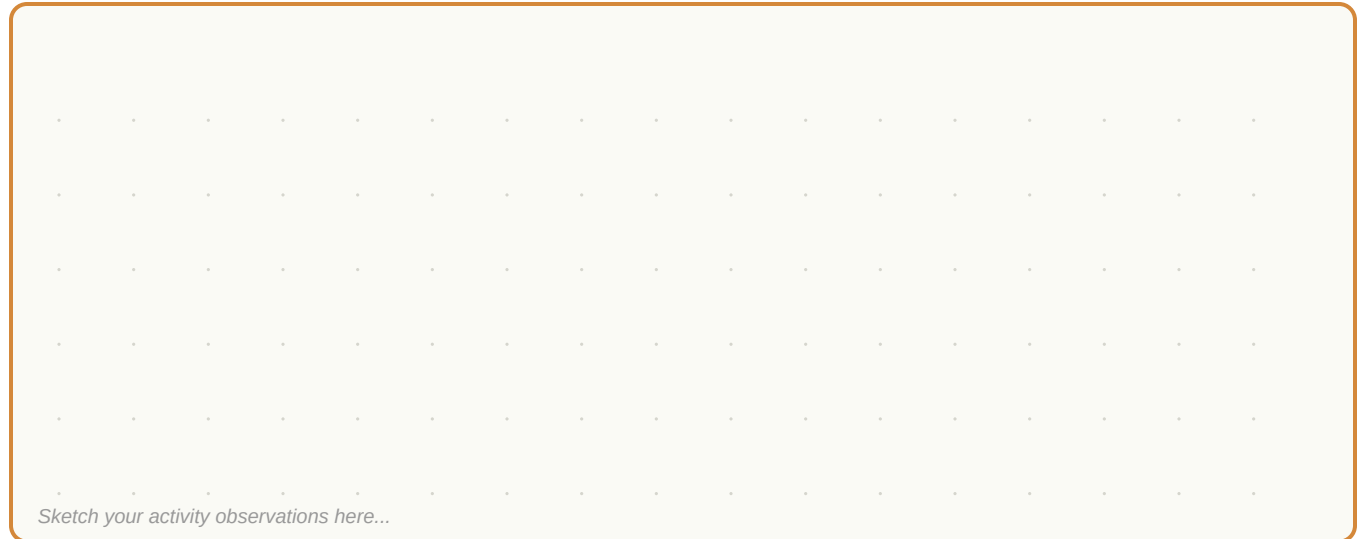
"The sense of beauty comes from early contact with nature." — Charlotte Mason

Week 1 — Continued

Activity:

Collect 5 leaves in different stages of change. Arrange them from green to fully changed.

Activity Sketch:



Sketch your activity observations here...

Written Narration:

Describe what you observed and learned this week in your own words.

Nature Connections:

What did this week's study remind you of? A book? A memory? Another observation?

Acorns & Oak Trees

Date: _____

Location: _____

Weather: _____

Guiding Question:

What can acorns tell us about the life cycle of an oak tree?

Look For:

- Acorns on the ground under oak trees
- Acorn caps separate from the acorn
- Different sizes and shapes of acorns
- Small holes in acorns made by insects

Word of the Week

Deciduous

Trees that shed their leaves each year, usually in autumn.

Nature Sketch:

Sketch an acorn and its cap. Look closely at the texture and patterns.

Sketch here...

Field Notes:

"Let them once get touch with Nature, and a habit is formed which will be a source of delight through life." — Charlotte Mason

Seasonal Vocabulary Cards

This section contains printable vocabulary cards organized by season. Each card features a nature vocabulary word and its definition. Cards correspond to the weekly Word of the Week, with additional bonus terms to extend your child's scientific vocabulary.

How to Use These Cards

- Print on cardstock for durability, then cut along the borders.
- Introduce the Word of the Week card during your nature walk.
- After the week's study, add the card to your child's vocabulary collection.
- Use the bonus cards to challenge older students or extend a topic.
- Review previously learned words regularly to build long-term retention.
- Punch a hole in the corner and store cards on a binder ring for easy access.

❖ FALL Vocabulary Cards ❖

FALL

Chlorophyll

The green pigment in leaves that helps plants make food from sunlight.

_____ ◆ _____

FALL

Deciduous

Trees that shed their leaves each year, usually in autumn.

_____ ◆ _____

FALL

Migration

The seasonal movement of animals from one region to another.

_____ ◆ _____

FALL

Decomposer

An organism that breaks down dead material and returns nutrients to the soil.

_____ ◆ _____

FALL

Dispersal

The way seeds spread away from the parent plant to grow in new places.



FALL

Habitat

The natural home of an organism, providing food, water, shelter, and space.



FALL

Camouflage

Colors or patterns that help an insect blend in with its surroundings.



FALL

Barometer

An instrument that measures air pressure to help predict weather changes.

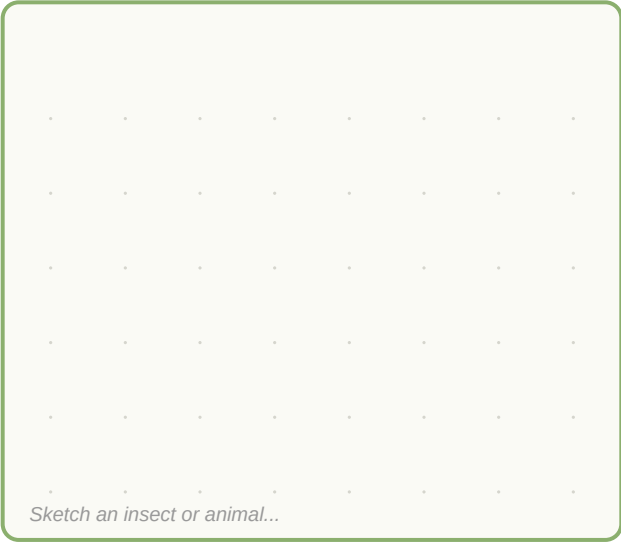
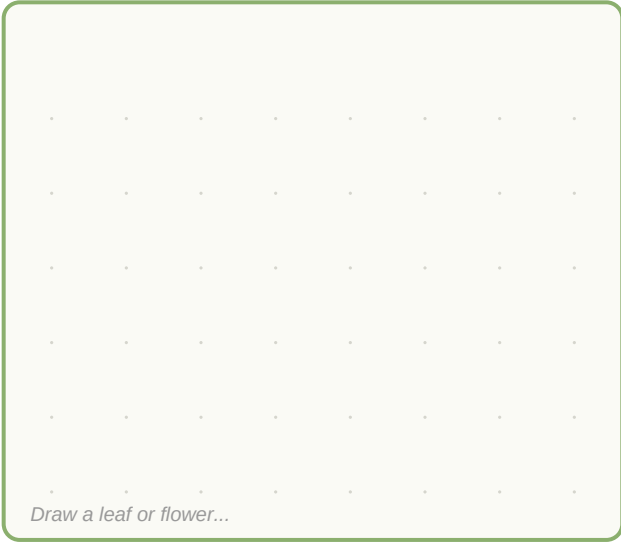


Field Sketch Practice Pages

Use these blank sketch pages for additional nature drawings, detailed specimen studies, or seasonal comparisons. In the Charlotte Mason tradition, the goal of sketching is not artistic perfection, but careful observation. When we slow down to draw something, we truly see it.

Reminders for Nature Sketching

- Look at your subject longer than you look at your paper.
- Draw what you actually see, not what you think should be there.
- Use light, gentle lines at first. Add details and darker lines later.
- Label your sketch with the date, location, and any features you notice.
- Color adds valuable information — use colored pencils if you have them.
- It is perfectly fine to draw the same subject more than once. Each time you will notice more.



Draw a close-up detail...

Sketch a seasonal change...

Draw from memory...

Observe the sky or clouds...

Thank You!

Thank you for choosing the **Charlotte Mason Nature Study Journal** for your homeschool journey. We hope this resource brings wonder, discovery, and joy to your family's nature study time throughout the year.

Your feedback makes a difference! If you found this resource helpful, please take a moment to leave a review on Teachers Pay Teachers. Your thoughtful review helps other homeschooling families discover quality materials and supports our ability to create more premium resources for your classroom.

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Premium Homeschool Resources

◆ Cultivating Curiosity Through Nature ◆