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TITLE: Plants, Identity, Memory: A Language Exercise

AGES: 12 to Adult, for 5+ Participants

MATERIALS:

- Pen & Paper
- 3 Colors of Index Cards
- Markers

RESOURCE LIST:

- S.J. Gould, An Evolutionary Perspective on the Strengths, Fallacies, and Confusions in the Concept of Native Plants
- Lies of the land: against and beyond Paul Kingsnorth's völkisch environmentalism, Out of the Woods Collaborative
- Cindy Jenson-Elliott (author), Carolyn Fisher (illustrator), Weeds Find a Way

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Share memories and impressions of plant interactions.
- Gain awareness of words commonly used to describe plants.
- Discuss what makes a plant a weed.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Choose one person to facilitate the exercise. They will ask the questions and lead the discussion. For discussion facilitation it may be helpful if the facilitator is familiar with some of the concepts covered in the texts in the resource list.
2. Choose one person to be the secretary. This person should write down lists of nouns, adjectives, and verbs people say during the exercise.
3. Participants take turns sharing their answers to the following questions in a round-robin fashion (Questions should be introduced sequentially by the facilitator, i.e. all participants answer question #1 before question #2 is introduced). As the questions are answered, the secretary records all key words used, dividing them into lists of nouns, verbs and adjectives.
 - What is your earliest or most significant memory from childhood involving plants?
 - Were the plants in that memory cultivated (planted/tended by people) or wild? If they were cultivated, can you think of an early memory with a non-cultivated plant, or vice versa? If you're not sure which they were, why is that?
 - Have you ever killed a plant? Or have you wanted to? Why did you kill it? How?



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- If you killed the plant in the above memory to eat it, can you think of a memory when you killed a plant but did not eat it? If you didn't eat it, what did you do with it?
- 4. Divide the lists of nouns, verbs and adjectives among participants, have them transfer the words to individual index cards (one color per category).
- 5. Make piles of each color and shuffle them. Each participant pulls a card from each pile: a noun, verb, and an adjective.
- 6. The facilitator provides time for participants to construct a sentence that uses all three of the words on their selected cards, then go around the circle and share their sentences. Bonus if your sentence is funny or tells a story.
- 7. Swap cards, and continue the process until all the cards have been used.

Group discussion questions:

- Could any of the plants listed be categorized as weeds? Why?
- Make lists of cultivated plants and weeds, and add to them.
- What is a weed? What are some positive characteristics of weeds?

FEEDBACK: Please email us with notes, comments and suggestions, or just to say hi at nextepochseedlibrary@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!