

THE HERO HUNT

A scavenger hunt for items in nature that represent some of the amazing Black activists of the environmental movement!



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Introduction:

As we work towards a more sustainable and environmentally just future, the stories we choose to share with our children are extremely important but equally important are the ones that have been excluded. This lesson highlights some environmental activists who's lives and legacy are often missing from the historical narrative. Black History Month shouldn't be the only time we celebrate and share Black stories!

Recommended Grades: K-5

Materials:

- Good walking shoes
- A safe space for a nature hike

Vocabulary:

- ✦ **Environmentalist:** A person who works to protect the environment.
- ✦ **Environmental Justice:** The fair treatment and involvement of all people in the efforts to protect and conserve the environment.
- ✦ **Representative:** Making sure people from all backgrounds and abilities are included in the process.

Directions:

This scavenger hunt can take place in any safe space to go for a walk in the woods, or even right in your own backyard. As you find each item read the description of the matching hero and see if you can guess their name. Most of these environmentalists are not ones we learn about when we study the history of the environmental movement, but they are all champions of environmental justice!

As you learn more about the life and legacy of these African American environmental heroes take the time to discuss why their stories might not be as well known.

Questions to consider while scavenger hunting:

Who are my favorite environmentalists and how did I first learn about them?

When I think of my favorite park or the place I like to hike most and then I think about who I might see there, what do the people look like?

Take a look online at websites for your local nature center or National Park, who's faces do you see in the pictures, are there people who look like you and how does that make you feel? What if there were no pictures with people who looked like you, would you feel welcome?

What can you do to help make the stories about who loves and wants to protect the outdoors more representative?

Now let's head outside!



The Hero Scavenger Hunt!

NATURE ITEM	HERO HISTORY
BLACK STONE OR PEBBLE	This hero was the first Black U.S. National Park Superintendent and he was known for being a protector of the giant Sequoia trees in California along with his calvary 'The Buffalo Soldiers'. He was born into slavery but would go on to become the first Black officer in the army to receive the rank of Captain!
FEATHER	A female eco-warrior named an "un-sung hero of compassion" by the Dalai Lama after her death for her work protecting and preserving the American Beach in Florida. She was born very wealthy and became a famous opera singer, but would end up giving all her money to conservation efforts.
A PERFECT WALKING STICK	He has walked across the entire United States (several times) in his efforts to raise awareness about the harmful effects of the oil industry! This hero spent 17 years not speaking as a silent protest, but his message was heard far and wide.
AN ACORN OR SEED FROM A TREE	Known as the father of environmental justice, this hero was the first to use the Civil Rights Law to charge a waste management company with discrimination. He was the first African American to be honored with the Sierra Club's John Muir Award.
A LEAF SHAPED LIKE A HEART	This modern day hero uses the art of storytelling to talk about the importance of making sure that outdoor spaces are welcoming for everyone. She works with all types of organizations to help them change their stories about African American's relationship with nature.
MOSS ON A TREE	This one you should know! She was an incredible naturalist and spent almost all of her time in the woods. The time she spent in the woods was as the conductor of the Underground Railroad. This hero used her knowledge of nature and how to survive in the wilderness to lead runaways slaves to freedom through the Appalachian Mountains.

The Answer Key:

1. Charles Young (1864-1922)
2. MaVynnee Betsch a.k.a. The Beach Lady (1935-2005)
3. John Francis a.k.a. Planetwalker
4. Dr. Robert Bullard
5. Carolyn Finney
6. Harriet Tubman (1820-1913)