

Sensory Exploration Activity Guide

Purpose: To use all your senses to record a nature walk along Cromford Canal between High Peak Junction and Cromford Canal Wharf.

Time: Approximately 60 minutes

Distance: Approximately 1.25 miles

Location: From High Peak Junction to Cromford Canal Wharf or vice versa.

Resources: Printed sensory recording sheet for each group and / or camera or tablet, supporting photos of 'life along the canals'

Teaching notes:

Share a brief history and context of the canal with your pupils, depending on where this walk fits within your day of activities it may be that the children can tell you what they know about the canal.

- Cromford canal was a man-made way of transporting goods, built in 1794 as an alternative to horses pulling heavy loads in carts along roads and tracks. Horses pulling barges along the canal was much more efficient and they could tow much larger loads than they could along the road (see supporting photo below).
- Rivers were also used for transporting goods in this way, but unfortunately not all rivers were suitable, or were in the right place, steam trains had yet to be invented so hundreds of miles of canal were dug out across the country to transport limestone, coal and other heavy materials.
- Cromford Canal was a 14-mile long busy transport hub, with tunnels, locks, bridges and aqueducts. But by 1944 it had been closed to traffic and the wildlife moved in.

Explain to your class that they are going to follow in the footsteps of the thousands of horses that would have walked along the tow path in the past. Along with the children who lived aboard the boats with their families. As they walk they are going to use all their senses to observe what is around them. You could draw their focus to the time of year it is and ask them to predict what they might find, especially in regard to nature.

Give a quick recap on the 5 senses:

Sight - remember to look up, look down, look closely for detail etc. Stop in visually interesting places, to focus the children.

Hearing - every so often the children should stand still in a little group with their adult and shut their eyes, this really helps them to focus on all the sounds they can hear.

Touch – children can focus on what touches them e.g. wind, sun, rain etc. or on what they can touch. Encourage the children to touch different things, from hard stone walls to furry leaves. To keep the children safe, you could either tell them only to touch something if they have checked with an adult first. Or you could stop in certain places, point out any 'dangers' like nettles, rubbish etc. and then encourage the children to find 5 different things to touch that feel different to each other. Remind the children to keep their hands away from their faces until they can wash / sanitise their hands.

Smell – sometimes the origin of a smell can be obvious, from the sewage works to a particular flower, other times it may be more general, like a 'fresh cold air' smell, or a 'farming' smell. Encourage the children to stop and smell specific things or the air more generally.

Taste – this may be straightforward like having an ice cream at the end of the walk, or drinking some water half way along, or it could be more of a ‘What they would like to taste’ along the canal.

The class can record their findings by filling in the attached sheet (1 per group) or by taking photos.

Back at school, the children could use the information collected to make a poem or create a piece of artwork or a poster to encourage people to visit Cromford Canal.



Photo <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/canal-trails/bingley-to-saltaire/historic-working-boats>



Photo <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking/canal-trails/bingley-to-saltaire/historic-working-boats>





Sensory exploration along Cromford Canal

We visited in: Autumn Winter Spring Summer

What we saw



What we heard



What we smelt



What we felt



What we tasted

