English oak

Quercus robur

LOOK TOGETHER

Look for a leaf with rounded lobes. The shape may remind you of wavy fingers. Acorns sit in little cups. An older oak can have rough, deeply grooved bark.

LIFE AROUND THIS TREE

Acorns feed animals such as jays and squirrels. Some acorns that escape being eaten may germinate. A bare oak twig often has several buds crowded near its tip.

A QUESTION TO KEEP

How does the acorn attach to the twig? Compare its long stalk with the very short leaf stalk.



English oak: rounded leaf lobes and young acorns on stalks. Photo: Mark Wilson

Photographic guide: English oak

A tiny flower, a hanging catkin

You might need: Enlarged hazel flower or nut photographs; optional magnifier or clay. Check allergies before using real shells.

LOOK TOGETHER

Hazel has hanging catkins and tiny female flowers with red threads called styles. A close photograph helps reveal them. Share a useful word if the child is interested.

A DIFFERENT WAY IN

In another season, a nut or empty shell may catch their attention. Use a large picture or an adult-held, checked example. Do not taste nuts during this study.

FOLLOW THE IDEA

A shell might inspire a clay container or a story. Help with the practical part as requested. Return to the same hazel: what can you see this time?



The red styles of a female hazel flower. Photo: H. Zell (CC BY-SA 3.0).

A rubbing reveals a leaf

You might need: A checked fallen leaf, paper and a broad crayon. Prepare a firm surface.

OFFER A TECHNIQUE

Place the leaf beneath paper with raised veins upwards. Rub gently with the crayon’s side. Demonstrate if help is wanted.

FOLLOW THEIR ATTENTION

The emerging shape, sound, colour or movement may be interesting. Marks without a leaf underneath are another possibility.

HELP WITH THE PRACTICAL PART

Hold the leaf or paper steady, or rub as directed. Clean textured surfaces offer an alternative to handling leaves.

RETURN TO THE QUESTION

Try another leaf or turn this one over. What changes? A photograph or the real leaf can help you look again.



A leaf rubbing in progress. WTWOL photograph.