



From there they go with their teachers in almost any weather - except for storms and thunderstorms - equipped by their parents with a change of clothing, backpacks and snacks.

They stay in the forest until 1 p.m. and are picked up by the parents after returning to the kindergarten.

Deliberately no tasks are given in the forest and no organised activities are offered apart from a singing circle. The forest is the prepared environment. Apart from a few simple materials such as nails, hammers, small saws, pocket knives, ropes, safety glasses, magnifying glasses and identification books, nothing is brought along. Of course, a forest ranger is part of the forest, and he is invited.

The intention is for the children to be playfully relaxed in the forest and to experience and understand with all their senses, the community of trees and other large and small plants, the animals and the earth on which they live and grow.

Even if in the first few hours most of the animals run away from the children, the children are surprised to find that overnight the leftovers on the ground disappear, and that there have probably been animals there again.

The children can have a variety of experiences in free play.

In her book "The Elements in Everyday Kindergarten - Earth", nature educator Gisela Walter divides the possibilities of experiencing nature into the following categories:



### Continents globe and continents puzzle map



At a glance the children are made aware of the different continents of the world. Since these are shown in the same colour on the globe and on the map, the children get a first idea of how something is brought from a sphere onto a flat surface - an important step towards abstraction.

The children are very happy to take out the pieces of the puzzle, draw round them on a piece of paper and get their first impression of the earth. Some children initially only assign the puzzle pieces to the continent control card. If some children want to practice reading, they can sort the existing name cards and possibly even copy them out.



## About the Origin of Writing

For a very long time that people have been living on Earth, they probably told each other everything they had experienced or found for dinner or something similar. They may have used gestures and noises. This worked wonderfully when you met each other directly. There was a problem, however, if you wanted to tell someone something and those people weren't around.

One day, someone must have thought of recording what he or she wanted to say - maybe in the sand or on a rock.

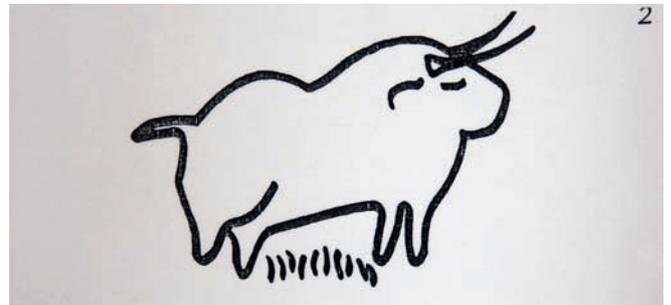
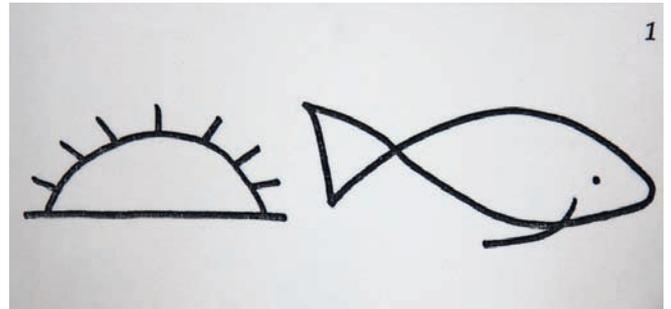


Such a drawing told others what this person wanted to tell. Maybe the following:

“Here you will find a lot of fish at sunrise!”

For a long time people probably painted pictures of this kind.

Here a hunter might want to tell others that he had observed 10 animals at one point.



Time passed and people continued to draw pictures. Some of them were real works of art. We know that today because some of these pictures were found in rock grottos on different continents.



Many of us start our lives in the same way, as a seed with a hard, waterproof layer or coating.



This layer protects us from damage when we are carried away by the wind, water or animals and you humans. Enough food for our baby plant is stored in this seed.



If the seeds have been transported to a place, there is not always the possibility that our baby plant can really grow. Millions of seeds are eaten by animals and you humans. Other seeds come to places where other plants already live and where there is no room for more of us. Sometimes the wind is so strong that it blows our seeds onto a bare rock where there is no water and no earth, or where it is so cold that we cannot develop. That is why our mother plants make many, many more seeds each year than is actually needed.



The seeds that land on the ground have the opportunity to develop. Once our seeds are in the ground, our seeds can absorb water through the outside coating. Then as soon as our seed breaks open, the thirsty root grows down into the earth and the first light green leaves grow upwards in search of warmth and the light of the sun.



“Parsley is my name. I have lots of vitamins, especially vitamin C. I’m one of the first herbs that grows in spring and help against spring tiredness. I’m used in soup and sauces and lots of other dishes. Potatoes with Parsley have me to thank for their name.”

“I’m Chives! People like me a lot because after the winter they need vitamins and a fresh taste. You can eat my leaves in salad. Buttered bread and chives is a dream.”



“Hello, I’m Sage and if I’m honest most people don’t like the way I taste because I’m a bit sour. But I’m treasured, because as a tea I work as a disinfectant. Wounds that I touch heal quicker and some sore throats go if I’m gargled with. I’m a complete healer for many ailments.”



“Greetings, I’m called Oregano. I don’t like to boast but children like me best. After all who can imagine Pizza or Spaghetti Bolognese without oregano? I’m very famous in Italy and butterflies like me a lot!”

“I am Chamomile, I am very gentle and not as spirited as Oregano. Children like to drink me as a tea when they have a stomach ache. It can happen if you eat too much pizza!”



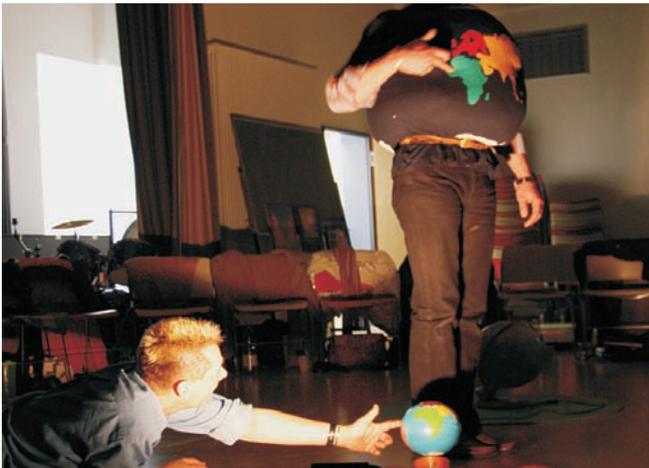
Fennel is my name! I am a delicious vegetable - when you prepare my bulb - and very helpful for people with digestive problems. My seeds can be baked in bread. I’m in tea that is given to babies so that they don’t suffer from wind. I’m very good for calming and for the digestion.”



# Other important activities in the elementary area

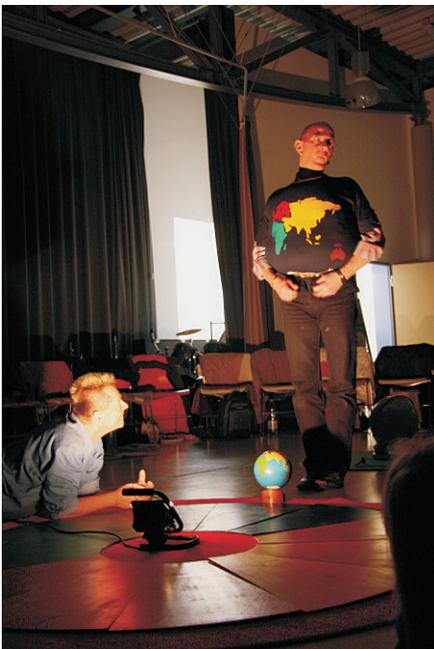
## The emergence of day and night

In order to get an idea of what happens when the earth rotates, it is particularly impressive for children when the educator takes on the role of the earth. For this the educator puts on a blue t-shirt, on which the continents are printed in the same colours as on the Nienhuis-globe. With a lot of pillows stuffed under the T-shirt, the “earth” is rounded. A strong spotlight represents the sun that shines on the earth. The educator stands facing the “sun” direction, so that the continent of Europe gets all the light, and points at the continent Europe.



“I can feel how the warmth of the “sun” is reaching me. It’s day-time with us. Now I turn around myself – counter-clockwise - because only then will Europe slowly move away from the sun with the earth, and with us it will be dark and it will cool down more and more. Now America comes into the light, there it is day. I slowly turn around and experience how Asia and then Europe are slowly being illuminated and warmed up again by the “sun”.”

At the same time, the educator has another person turn the globe, because the tilt is particularly emphasized here.





Maria Montessori has devised a special ritual<sup>35</sup> for the annual cycle, which is celebrated on the birthday of a child or adult in the group:

A circle with the twelve-monthly segments is laid out. The respective month name is on each segment. So that the children can interpret the months in the correct order, it is advisable to include the zodiac signs, because this creates a “domino effect” as a guide.



In the middle of the circle is a sun with a large candle on it, which symbolizes the “light of life”. The globe is on the month segment of the birthday child and on the segment the number of candles that correspond to the age of the child.



The birthday child goes to the place of his month of birth and takes the globe in his hands. The big candle is already burning in the middle - the light of life. Now the birthday child walks its first year of life, month after month. The direction of rotation is counter-clockwise because, from our point of view, the earth rotates around the sun. When walking, the child can also turn the globe on its own axis - as a symbol of day and night.

During the first year of life, the birthday child recounts important events from that year. In the case of smaller children, an adult reads from the birthday book or tells stories for the

child. The closest confidants of the birthday child (usually the parents) compile a “birthday book” for this ritual, which contains pictures and small anecdotes for each year of life.

After circumnavigating the circle, the child arrives at the month of his birth, takes a candle from there, lights it at the life candle and puts the lit candle on the monthly segment and says: “Now I’m one year old!” The ceremony is repeated for each birthday.

<sup>35</sup> For the photos of the birthday ritual in a Waldkindergaten we heartily thank Frau Angelika Frank from the Mainburger Waldkindergarten..