

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In this lesson, students will learn about how they can care for the environment, and how big and small actions can make a difference.

Grade Levels 3-6

Note: Lessons are designed to support multiple grade levels. Modification suggestions and extensions are for alternative pacing and to engage students at various levels.

Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations

Social Studies Standards (NCSS)

Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption

What You'll Need

"Green Teen" article from TIME for Kids, writing materials, "Resource Log" worksheet

Essential Question(s)

- What is environmentalism?
- How can you be an environmentalist on a large scale? On a small scale?



Before teaching this lesson, share your perspectives in this short survey.

Learning Objectives

- I can define and give examples of *environmentalism*.
- I can list actions both big and small that will make an impact on the environment.
- I can make a commitment to one action that will benefit the environment.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Introduction

Display the word *environment* for students to see. Ask them to turn and discuss the definition of the word and the components that make up the environment (e.g., land, air, water, plant life, wildlife). Have partners share their ideas with the class. Then add to the end of the word to make it *environmentalism*. Explain that this means “working to the preserve, restore, or improve the natural environment.” Put students in small groups, and have them consider the following questions:

- What are some positive effects that humans have had on the environment?
- What are some negative effects that humans have had on the environment?
- Why is environmentalism necessary?

Discussion

Have students read the article “[Green Teen](#)” independently. As they do, have them take note of what impact humans have had on the environment. Ask them to identify the two main problems in the article, and the solutions.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Mateo do that helps the environment?
2. Why did Mateo originally start the program? Why did he continue?
3. How does Mateo’s work benefit others?
4. What law in Mateo’s state promotes helping the environment? Does your state have similar laws?

Small Group Activity

It’s important to understand that environmental actions can be big or small. For that reason, we have broken this lesson into two components: “Think Big” and “Act Small.” Teachers, you can use one or both of these components to help students understand the many ways they can impact the environment.

Think Big

Some acts of environmentalism are large-scale. Examples include helping to pass laws that impact a town or state, creating a public-service announcement, and starting or joining an advocacy group that has far-reaching

impact. Remind students of Michigan’s beverage container deposit law. Do students think that should be implemented in all states? Group them and tell them they’ll be imagining a law that has an environmental impact. Have groups list ideas to share with the class. Then bring the class together and have groups share one or two ideas. Here are some ideas if further facilitation is required:

- setting fines or rewards programs for recycling
- rebates for using public transportation
- limits on water usage per household

Have the class vote on the idea they think would have the best impact, or would be the most likely to be adopted in their town. Research whether something similar already exists. If not, have students write a proposal to their senators.

Act Small

Many acts of environmentalism are small-scale. Every day, students make choices that affect the environment positively or negatively. Provide them with the worksheet “[Resource Log](#),” to help them gain a better awareness of their choices and their impact. On the sheet, students should journal as many activities as they can throughout their day. Have them consider the resources used when they do everything from eating lunch to taking notes on the printed sheet of paper.

The following day, have students pair up and share some takeaways from their log. Which resources were used most? What surprised you most?

Closing

Have students to come up with at least one commitment they’ll make to environmentalism. This can be a small action, such as turning off the water when they brush their teeth, or a large one, such as starting a compost club at school. Ask them to come up with ways by which they’ll hold themselves accountable or remind themselves of their commitment. They might ask a sibling to be an accountability partner, put a sticky note on their bathroom mirror, or ask for an adult’s support in starting their club or group.

Exit Ticket (Survey)

Have students complete the “[Caring for the Environment Survey](#)” to capture the impact this lesson has had on them.

Optional Extension Opportunities

Look through the tool kits and activities available from the following sites, and choose one of interest for your class.

- [World Wildlife Fund](#): Use the tool kits to explore, analyze, and discuss topics from polar bears and climate change to reducing food waste.
- [Wyland Foundation](#): Use the teaching resources and activities to engage students in learning about marine life and water science.

Home-to-School Connections

- **Talk about it.** Have students share their “Resource Log” with a family member. You can send home an additional copy to have someone at home fill one out, too.
- **Act on it.** Discuss the commitments students have made. Have them get their family involved in helping them stick to their commitment. Maybe the family can come up with an additional commitment together.