



Grade Level: Middle School

Subject Correlation: Social Studies, Math, Language Arts

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Begin describing the interdependence between humans and nature.
2. Describe the importance of positive behavior with regard to natural resources.
3. Demonstrate respectful attitudes and behaviors with regards to the environment.

Homework: Before the lesson, ask students to focus on one current environmental issue they think is important and write down some current challenges facing this issue. Topics might include recycling, fines for littering, tax on luxury cars or gasoline, protecting local and state natural treasures, protecting local communities from industrial pollution, better funding for public transportation, subsidies for organically grown food growers, or funding for a healthier and more environmentally friendly school environment. The list is endless. Think of environmental issues that are close to your school community as well as national and international issues.

- For information about national legislation, visit [Thomas Legislation Information](http://thomas.loc.gov) at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Length of Lesson: One Class Period

Outline (with times)

10 minutes

Introduction: What We Have Learned About Sustainability?

As a class, spend a few minutes reviewing what you have studied and learned about in this unit regarding sustainability. Here are some sample review questions:

1. Name some natural resources used by humans for energy and some we use to support our daily lives.
2. Describe a sustainable lifestyle.
3. What are some things you can do on a daily basis in order to live more sustainably?
4. What is the difference between renewable and non-renewable fuels? Name some advantages and disadvantages of each.
5. Describe three ways that humans affect the environment and three ways that humans are affected by the environment.

30 minutes

Activity: There Should Be A Law!

In this activity, students will discuss environmental issues where they see an opportunity for the government or community to get involved.

- As a class, take a few minutes to brainstorm environmental problems which the students think can be resolved by community or government involvement. (Use ideas under the above homework section.) Write these ideas on the board in front of the class.
- Students will decide which topics are the most important to them by voting.
- Divide the class into small groups based on which students want to work on a particular environmental issue (or teachers will assign groups).
- Working together, each group will create an environmental law. Should it be a city, state, or national law? Should the law encourage or discourage a particular action? Is there a penalty or reward? Does this new law amend an existing law or is it an altogether new idea? What is the goal of the law – what does it attempt to achieve? What complications might arise from such a proposed law? Examples might include funding, raising taxes, less funding for other things, opposing opinions. (Some teachers may find it best for students to complete this assignment for homework.)
- For information about how actual national legislation appears, visit the [Thomas Legislation Information](http://thomas.loc.gov) Web site at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.
- Each group will have a turn to present the new laws to the class.
- As a class, students will decide which laws are appropriate to promote among school peers and administrators. Maybe students will be motivated to write letters to their local or school newspaper addressing their concerns. Students can also write to their representatives on the state, local, or national level. Students may also want to present their ideas to the school administration, parent-teacher association, and/or the student council.

What else can I do for the Environment?

- [Check your Ecological Footprint size](http://www.earthday.net) – how does your daily routine effect your environment and the earth's natural resources? Visit the link to the Ecological Footprint from Earth Day Network's home page, www.earthday.net.
- Read over the nine environmentally conscious behaviors you can take to "[Turn the Tide.](#)"
- Write letters to your local and school newspaper.
- Write letters to government representatives on the local, state, and national level. (To locate contact information for your representatives, visit [Thomas Legislative Information](http://thomas.loc.gov) at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.)
- Think about some of the decisions you make on a daily basis that affect your ecological footprint; things like walking more, using public transportation, buying locally grown produce, taking shorter showers, turning off lights and water when not in use.... Inform your friends and family about environmental issues and the simple things they can do on a daily basis to save the environment. Remind them of these things when they come up.
- Organize recycling efforts in your home, class, school and community. Include educational materials such as pictures or posters instructing people what can be recycled, and how and why this is important.



We Are All Responsible