

SUBJECT AREAS:

Social sciences

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Social sciences, environment, justice, case studies.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine environmental justice issues from social sciences perspectives.

MATERIALS:

Case studies/articles on environmental justice issues, data sets/infographics illustrating environmental disparities, writing materials, multimedia resources.

GRADE/LEVEL:

Upper Elementary School (12-14)

DURATION:

Preparation time: 1 hour

Activity time: 40- 60 minutes

PLACE:

Classroom, outdoors

AUTHOR:

SYNTHESIS Center for Research and Education

Social Sciences Perspectives on Environmental Justice

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome, students, to today's exploration of environmental justice through the lens of social sciences. Environmental justice is the principle that all individuals, regardless of race, income, or geography, have the right to a healthy environment. In this lesson, we will delve into the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to environmental injustices and explore ways to address systemic inequities.

BACKGROUND:

This lesson delves into the crucial connection between social sciences and environmental justice. It acknowledges the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on marginalised communities and the importance of understanding the social, economic, and political factors at play. By examining these issues, students gain insights into systemic inequities and explore avenues for advocating for fairness and sustainability within their communities.

Procedure:

1. Introduction (15 minutes): Define environmental justice and discuss its relevance in addressing inequities in environmental impacts and access to resources. Introduce the concept of intersectionality and its role in understanding how social factors intersect with environmental issues.

2. Case Study Analysis (30 minutes): Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a case study or article highlighting an environmental justice issue (e.g., pollution in marginalized communities, unequal access to clean water). Students analyse the case studies, identifying social, economic, and political factors contributing to environmental injustices.

3. Data Interpretation (30 minutes): Present students with data sets or infographics illustrating environmental disparities based on factors such as race, income, and geography. Guide students in interpreting the data and discussing the implications of environmental injustices for affected communities.

4. Group Discussion (20 minutes): Facilitate a whole-class discussion based on the case studies and data analysis. Encourage students to share insights on the root causes of environmental injustices and discuss strategies for addressing systemic inequities.

5. Brainstorming Solutions (20 minutes): Lead a brainstorming session where students generate ideas for promoting environmental justice within their communities. Encourage students to consider grassroots activism, policy advocacy, and community organizing as potential avenues for change.

FUN FACTS:

- *The term "environmental justice" was coined in the 1980s by civil rights activists in response to the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits.*
- *The landmark environmental justice case of Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982, sparked the movement after predominantly African American communities protested against the siting of a hazardous waste landfill in their area.*
- *Studies have shown that minority and low-income communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards such as air and water pollution, hazardous waste sites, and industrial facilities.*
- *Environmental justice intersects with other social justice movements, including civil rights, indigenous rights, and labor rights, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues.*

ASSESSMENT:

1. **Case Study Analysis:** Evaluate students' understanding of environmental justice issues by assessing their analysis of case studies. Use rubrics to measure their ability to identify social, economic, and political factors contributing to environmental injustices and propose solutions.
2. **Data Interpretation:** Assess students' data literacy skills by evaluating their interpretation of data sets or infographics related to environmental disparities. Measure their ability to analyze trends and draw connections between social factors and environmental outcomes.
3. **Group Discussion Participation:** Observe students' participation in whole-class discussions on environmental justice topics. Assess their ability to articulate insights, ask probing questions, and engage in respectful dialogue with peers.

EVALUATION:

In evaluating students' understanding of environmental justice, it's crucial to assess their ability to analyze case studies, interpret data, engage in meaningful discussions, and propose actionable solutions. By observing their participation in class activities, reviewing written reflections, and assessing presentation skills, teachers can gauge the depth of students' comprehension and their capacity to apply interdisciplinary knowledge to address real-world environmental challenges. Effective evaluation provides valuable feedback to guide further learning and empowers students to become informed advocates for environmental equity and justice within their communities.