

# Environmental Issues Journal

(supports the Environmental Issues course)

## Activity Information

**Grade Appropriate Level:** 5 - 9

**Duration:** Used as a course. Eight classes of 30 minutes.

**Materials:** Duo-tang journal, video series: AFRICAN JOURNEY, The Lorax story By Dr. Seuss, usually available at most school or public libraries.

**Included with plan:** parable called, "Half-a-loaf", and poem called, "The Faceless Ones" Both of these are included with this lesson plan.

## Objective

- Teach students about environmental issues.
- Students will learn how to address serious world issues, both informing them encouraging them to take positive action.

## Prescribed learning outcomes

### Life Science (B.C.'s Living Resources)

It is expected that students will:

- identify living resources in the local environment
- describe how humans use B.C.'s living resources
- describe the known and potential environmental impacts of using B.C.'s living resources
- devise a strategy for sustaining a living resource

### Life Science (Social Issues)

It is expected that students will:

- assess different impacts of using renewable and non-renewable natural resources
- compare and contrast the practical, ethical, and economic dimensions of population growth and polluted environments
- relate extraction and harvest of earth's resources to sustainability and reduction of waste



## Skills

Co-operative learning, critical and creative thinking, research, problem solving, and communication skills.

## Suggested Instructional Strategies

Potential topics could include: The ocean crisis, i.e. global warming impacts on fish species, overharvesting of commercial fish, decline in coral reefs, endangered species, the future of our tropical rainforests, basic ecological concepts, and our ecological footprint. **Ecological footprint** is the area of land and water required to support a defined economy or population at a specified standard of living. Industrialized economies are considered to require far more land than they have, thus, through trade, impacting on resources in other countries. Also known as 'appropriated carrying capacity', this concept also



incorporates the distributional aspects of sustainable production and consumption.

- In the first class we discuss what topics students would like to cover. As well, students design their own criteria for how this course and their journals are going to be evaluated.
- Have students write their reflections weekly on various issues in a journal. They can paste in photos or sketch species etc. This is a time for them to reflect on this course, what they like, don't like, what they have learned, what they think, how they feel etc. This is an excellent opportunity for the teacher to see what students are getting out of the course and this lesson, make improvement suggestions and communicate. Students are expected to keep a duotang journal, (or computer-based) in which they write weekly reflections on a variety of topics, based on their research, reading etc. Encourage students to contact field experts around their topic of study, i.e. wildlife, marine biologists etc. Their journal writings may be based on an activity that we have done, a poem or book that I have read to them, or something they may have watched on tv, or what they have learned etc.



### JOURNAL TOPICS:

1. Why did you sign up for this course? What are your expectations? What would you like to see? How did you like making your own evaluation etc.

2. Reflections on a video series called, AFRICAN JOURNEY. This is a video series about a young Canadian boy and his experiences in Africa. If it is not available in your area, try another popular video such as Free Willy or Pocohontas and have students determine the environmental messages.



3. Extinction is forever. After they complete a variety of activities (species diversity, how fast our rainforests are disappearing, have them write about their reflections on the activities.

4. Debate topics: After participating in a debate on a variety of subjects, they would write down their thoughts. A debate idea: divide



students in groups with one being the aboriginals who live in the rainforest and depend on it for food, shelter etc. another group being farmers who want to burn the forest to grow crops, non-human species who live in the forest (animals, birds, insects etc.) and environmentalists who want to preserve the forests forever. For gifted students, the teacher may want to suggest they tackle the role of the pharmaceutical companies who want to preserve the forest because it may contain the next cure for cancer...Have students explore the challenges of consensus decision making. Can they find a compromise amongst all the many different points of view? Is there a solution? There are a

wealth of resources to help teachers tackle debate process, rules etc at

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml)

5. The Lorax. By Dr. Seuss. Have 2 students read aloud the story of the Lorax (it is about forests and resources), and then have students write about what the story said, what was the message?

6. Read the parable called "Half-a-loaf". In this journal, they were asked to reflect on this parable, its meaning, messages, lessons etc. This parable appears below.
7. Students may write poems and add them to the bottom of their journals.
8. A poem called "The Faceless Ones". Read the poem and then watch the video of it. This poem appears below.

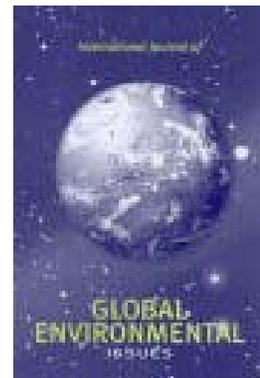
Note: The journals worked really well. Even the students that were weak writers excelled at this task. The topics are endless. The above are just a few ideas. My students wrote at least a page on each topic in their journals. The responses were excellent.

### Cross-Curricular Interests

Math, Science, Information Technology and Social Studies.  
Environmental science  
Language Arts (Creative writing)

### Suggested Links

<http://www.globalissues.org/EnvIssues/EnvIssues.asp>  
<http://www.environmental-center.com>  
<http://environment.about.com/mbody.htm>  
<http://www.inderscience.com>  
<http://www.policy.ca/teach/discussion.php3>  
<http://www.enviroliteracy.org/article.php/318.html>  
[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml)



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POEM and PARABLE:

### The Faceless Ones

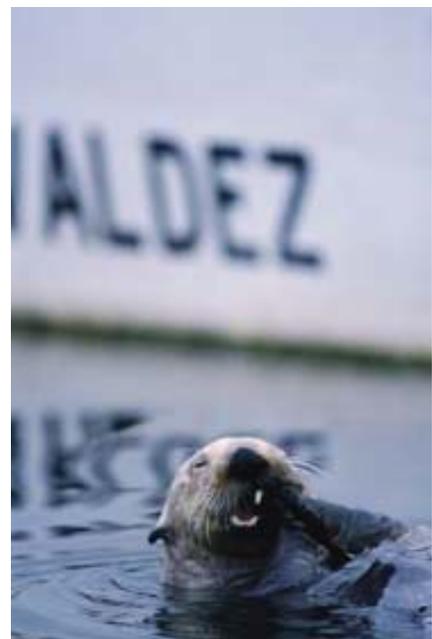
When the Exxon Valdez spilled her guts  
off Alaska's pristine shores, she belched black shame, spewing bitter  
blame for the faceless to ignore.

But the Valdez trolls, with her single hull  
wasn't special or unique.  
It was just bad luck that the thing got stuck  
to hear the faceless speak.

Where oil slicks spread, the birds are dead  
their feathers destroyed by tar.  
The seals are gone, no salmon spawn  
where the thick black globules are.

No whales sound, there, no hungry bear  
will set foot on a black ice flow,  
To hunt for food in a sea of crude  
that smothers the sea below.

When you drive again through the mountain chain  
that makes this land so fair.



Look up in awe at the Mackinaw,  
made of trees that the mountains wear.

And you might take note that the once thick coat  
is showing wear and tear.  
It still looks fine but the holes are a sign  
that the faceless ones are there.

When the hills are bare, there'll be no soil  
there for the tree to fasten on.  
The bright woodcock will be vanished  
long dead and gone.

There will be no life there for the grizzly bear  
neither cougar nor wolf will prowl.  
No sign of flight through the woods of night  
will signal the spotted owl.

There's blood in the ooze from the tankers screws.  
There's blood in the chainsaws teeth.  
There's dread in the thread of the steel cats tread.  
The torn earth screams beneath.

There's the breath of death in the pipelines path  
and the strip mines open sore.  
And the pulp mills sweat a cold poison threat  
to our children that we can't ignore.

And they'll wash their hands of the blasted lands  
lying barren and bleak and bare.

We must stand up to the faceless ones,  
the men who control the winds.  
The winds of power and the winds of war,  
the fiscal blizzard wind.

The winds that soar and the winds that roar,  
the winds that destroy the trees.  
We must make them see that the winds of change  
are stronger than all of these.

For we have the right  
and the power to indict  
those leaders who won't take note.  
They must meet our needs  
and listen,  
and heed

For we have the power to vote.

(I am not sure who wrote this, I received a copy of this from a friend from University)



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## Half a Loaf

Once upon a time there was a class and the students expressed disapproval of their teacher. Why should they be concerned with the global interdependency, global problems and what others of the world were thinking and feeling and doing?

And the teacher said she had a dream in which she saw one of her students fifty years from today. The student was angry and said, "Why did I learn so much detail about the past and the administration? of my county and so little about the world?"

He was angry because no one told him that as an adult he would be faced almost daily with the problems of global interdependent nature, be they problems of peace, security, quality of life, food, inflation, or scarcity of natural resources.

The angry student found he was a victim as well as the beneficiary. "Why was I not warned? Why was I not better educated? Why did my teachers not tell me about the problems and help me understand I was a member of the interdependent human race?"

With even greater anger the student shouted, "You helped me extend my hands with incredible machines, my eyes with telescopes and microscopes, my ears with telephones, radios, and sonar. My brain with computers."

"But you did not help me extend my heart, love, concern to the entire human family. You, teacher, gave me half a loaf!"

