

Creating Awareness of Environmental Concerns
Suggested Grades: Pre-K through Grade 4
Lesson by: Meagan McCormick

(Be sure to contact the Castellani Art Museum for a copy of the teacher resource guide containing the images, activities, and additional information associated with this lesson plan.)

Disciplines: NYS Learning Standards

◆ Mathematics, Science and Technology

Standard 4: Science

Performance Indicator: *The Living Environment* (7) Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment

Standard 7: Interdisciplinary Problem Solving

Performance Indicator: *Connections* (1) The knowledge and skills of mathematics, science, and technology are used together to make informed decisions and solve problems, especially those relating to issues of science/technology/society, consumer decision making, design, and inquiry into phenomena

Performance Indicator: *Strategies* (2) Solving interdisciplinary problems involves a variety of skills and strategies, including effective work habits; gathering and processing information; generating and analyzing ideas; realizing ideas; making connections among the common themes of mathematics, science, and technology; and presenting results

◆ The Arts- Visual Arts

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Performance Indicator (1): Students will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Students will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Students will use a variety of art materials processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Performance Indicator (2): Students will know and use a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. Students will know about resources and opportunities for participation in visual arts in the community (exhibitions, libraries, museums, galleries) and use appropriate materials (art reproductions, slides, print materials, electronic media). Students will be aware of vocational options available in the visual arts.

Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Performance Indicator (3): Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual art characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the way in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed in other disciplines.

◆ English Language Arts (ELA)

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Performance Indicator (1): Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Performance Indicator (2): Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Performance Indicator (1): Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect how talk varies in different situations.

Descriptive Title: Creating Awareness of Environmental Concerns

Context (Rationale):

On April 22, 1970 the first Earth Day was celebrated. It was the result of many years of trying to educate and inform the public of the dangers confronting our environment. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day, traveled throughout the country speaking out about environmental issues such as pollution which affects the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we use to grow our food as well as other man-made abuses. In a desire to create a modern industrial and technological world too often little consideration was paid to the physical destruction done to the earth. Forests were cut down but new trees were not planted to take their place. Animals were killed for their furs or some other valued reason with little concern that they could become endangered species. Mines were dug into the earth to extract valuable ores needed for industry, often leaving behind huge pits that destroyed the land making it useless for any other kind of activity. Factory smoke stacks polluted surrounding areas while harmful chemicals were often dumped in nearby rivers and streams. Further assault on the earth occurred in the attempt to dispose of the products used by the consumers of all of the goods produced through this new industrial world. Garbage landfills grew to the size of mountains and extended over larger amounts of land, and sometimes contained chemicals that seeped through the soil and contaminated nearby areas. Senator Nelson along with other conservationists, felt it was necessary to make people aware of all of these dangers and to begin to act in a positive way to not only stop the abuses but to begin a program to create a healthy planet. From the very beginning, children and schools were approached to support this very important day because children have an important stake in this endeavor. They will inherit this earth long after their parents and grandparents have passed away. What kind of life they have will depend on what happens now. As they view artwork that addresses the ideals of what Earth Day means students should develop a sense of what they can do as individuals to create a healthy earth. Furthermore, they will become aware of how some artists incorporated these ideals into their artwork.

Performance Task:

The student will be able to –

- Identify artwork that represents facets of environmental concerns
- Discuss how the artwork deals with the environment
- Describe the importance of recycling
- List objects that can be recycled
- Describe how recycling reduces pollution
- Discuss why it is important to reduce pollution
- List the three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle
- Discuss how new products are created through recycling
- Create a recycled collage/sculpture

Art Resources:

- Earth Day 1970, Robert Rauschenberg, Castellani Art Museum
- General Delivery 1971, Robert Rauschenberg, Castellani Art Museum
- Life In A Landfill 1990, Christy Rupp, Castellani Art Museum
- Black Light: Zag 6 1971, Louise Nevelson, Castellani Art Museum
- Night Column I 1967, Louise Nevelson, Castellani Art Museum
- Façade IV: Lullaby for Jumbo 1966, Louise Nevelson, Castellani Art Museum
- Robot 1991, Nam June Paik, Castellani Art Museum

Art Materials:

- Cardboard
- Elmer's Glue Bottles
- Glue Sticks
- Scissors
- Paper towel tubes
- Toilet paper tubes
- Scrap paper
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Fabric Scraps
- Recycled objects from the class (List provided to classroom teacher earlier)
- Markers

Motivation:

The teacher might ask the students if they have ever driven behind the Outlet Mall and noticed the huge mountain that extends all along the road. Then the teacher will ask them if they know what that "mountain" really is? While the younger children may not know that it is actually a garbage landfill the older children are probably aware of its existence. The teacher will discuss what a landfill is, what makes up a landfill and what concerns, especially environmental, arise because of it. The teacher may tell students that according to the Environmental Protection Agency, the

average American produces about 4.4 pounds of garbage a day. The teacher may then ask students if they can think of ways to lessen the amount of garbage people create. One of the answers should be the practice of recycling. Students will be told that recycled products are important not only because they lessen the amount of garbage collected which can save space in landfills, but they can be reused in a different form. They can even become parts of works of art! By studying the artwork in the gallery students will see examples of how artists tried to educate people about the importance of a healthy environment and they will also see how some artists chose to use what other people might consider garbage to produce major works of art.

Presentation:

1. The teacher will direct students into the gallery featuring artwork that represents examples of artists' works that raised awareness of environmental concerns as well as artwork actually created using discarded materials, or what might be considered "garbage."
2. The teacher will begin the lesson by posing the motivational question concerning the landfill located behind the Outlet Mall in Niagara County. Students might be surprised to learn that there is another landfill in Lewiston as well and that garbage from all over the state travels in trucks to be delivered at its site.
3. The teacher will encourage students to discuss why landfills are necessary.
4. The teacher will present statistics to the class concerning the make-up of garbage landfills. Students might be surprised to learn that fast food containers, office paper, disposable diapers and plain plastic bags contribute an important percentage of the garbage found in landfills. The average American produces 4.4 pounds of garbage a day, or a total of 29 pounds per week and 1,600 pounds a year.
5. The teacher will also tell students that this figure does not include industrial waste or commercial trash which is a far greater number. Students will be told that with the garbage produced in America alone it would be possible to form a line of filled-up garbage trucks and reach the moon.
6. Students should be asked what they can do individually to help to lessen the amount of garbage created.
7. Most students will probably talk about recycling. The teacher will help students list commonly recycled materials such as plastic (yogurt, cottage cheese, strawberry baskets, milk, soap, juice, water, grocery sacks, produce bags, as well as other plastic items including toys, plastic hangers, shelves, baskets, and many other products), glass, steel, aluminum cans and foil, drink boxes, paper, including corrugated cardboard, white office paper, newspapers, phonebooks, waxed cartons.
8. The teacher will stress that recycling not only helps to lessen the size of landfills but also creates a new use for a product that might have been discarded. Some products might actually be donated to charity such as clothes that are no longer worn or furniture and appliances that are being

replaced with newer models.

9. The teacher will direct students to first look at the artwork of Rauschenberg and Rupp and ask them to describe what they see and how the work relates to the environment. The teacher will also discuss the background to Earth Day, especially as it pertains to Rauschenberg's poster.

10. The teacher will ask students if they can explain why Rupp chose a tree stump filled with newspaper to describe a landfill.

11. The teacher will also stress that recycling allows a product that would have been discarded to be used in some other useful way. Some artists have taken what others might consider garbage or junk and have actually created pieces of art.

12. The teacher will direct students to look at the works of Nevelson and Paik and ask students to describe what they see. Can they identify pieces that may have been discarded?

13. The teacher will discuss the background history of each artist and their work.

14. Students will then be given directions concerning their art project. They will construct a collage/sculpture using recycled objects.

* This lesson can be adapted to higher grade levels by the teacher with slight modifications. The teacher may wish to include topics such as global warming and climate change, and deep water off-shore oil drilling.

Assessment Tools and Evidence:

Tools: At the end of the session the teacher will ask students to share their collage/sculpture with the rest of the class. The teacher will ask the students questions about their assignment and allow other students to comment.

Evidence: The evidence of whether or not the students understood the influence of recycled products to create art will be determined by their artwork and their descriptions.

Teacher Reflection/Follow Up: Do the students understand the concept of recycling? Did they use the correct materials to create their art? The teacher will make decisions based on the work created by the students and feedback from the subject area teacher.