



"America Recycles: Small Acts, Big Impact" November 2024 Lesson Plan - Elementary

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, "America Recycles: Small Acts, Big Impact," students will explore the importance of recycling and how even small efforts can contribute to a healthier planet. Through engaging activities such as sorting recyclables and creating recycling posters, students will learn what recycling is, why it matters, and how to recycle properly. The lesson emphasizes the collective power of small actions and encourages students to take responsibility for their environment. With fun hands-on activities and thoughtful discussions, students will gain a deeper understanding of how their everyday choices can make a big impact on the world around them.

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand the concept of recycling and its importance.
2. Learn what can be recycled and how to recycle properly.
3. Explore the impact of recycling on the environment.
4. Recognize how small actions can collectively create a big difference.

Time:

1 hour + optional extension activities

Materials Needed:

- Recycling bins (labeled for different materials: paper, plastic, metal, glass)
- Printable recycling worksheet
- Reading book (suggestions below)
- Video on recycling (suggestion provided below)
- Small items for sorting activity (plastic bottles, paper, metal cans, etc.)
- Markers, crayons, paper for a recycling poster activity

Vocabulary:

- Recycle
- Waste
- Conserve
- Reduce



Introduction (10 minutes)

Hook: Begin by asking, "How much trash do you think we make in a day?" Share this stat:

- **Stat:** The average American produces nearly **5 pounds of trash every day**, and over **292 million tons** of waste are created in the U.S. every year. Much of this could be recycled!

What is Recycling?: Explain that recycling is turning old things into new things instead of throwing them away. Ask students, "Who here recycles at home?" Discuss briefly.

Why Recycle?: Recycling saves energy, conserves natural resources, reduces pollution, and helps slow down climate change.

Video (5 minutes):

Show a short video explaining the recycling process, such as "**Recycling for Kids**" by SciShow Kids (available on YouTube). This will visually show what happens to items when they are recycled.

Group Activity: Recycling Sorting Game (15 minutes):

1. **Objective:** Teach children to sort recyclable materials.
 2. **Setup:** Place several small items (e.g., plastic bottles, paper, metal cans) in a pile. Have the students work in groups to sort the items into the correct recycling bins (labeled paper, plastic, metal, glass).
 3. **Discussion:** After sorting, ask them:
 - Why is it important to recycle these items?
 - What happens if we don't recycle them?
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Worksheet and Reading (15 minutes):

1. **Worksheet:** Hand out a recycling worksheet where students must color in items that can be recycled and cross out items that cannot.



2. **Read Aloud:** Choose one of the following books to read a short excerpt (5-10 minutes):
 - **"Why Should I Recycle?"** by Jen Green
 - **"Michael Recycle"** by Ellie Bethel
 - **"The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle: A Story About Recycling"** by Alison Inches
 - **"Recycle! A Handbook for Kids"** by Gail Gibbons

Discuss key points from the book about why recycling is important and what children can do to help.

Poster Creation: Small Acts, Big Impact (10 minutes):

1. Have the students work in pairs to create a poster that promotes recycling.
 - Title: "Small Acts, Big Impact!"
 - Include images of things that can be recycled and a message encouraging others to recycle.
 2. Once complete, have each pair present their poster and explain their message.
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Closing Activity (5 minutes):

1. **Reflection:** Ask students to share one small thing they can do at home to help the planet by recycling.
 2. **Class Recycling Pledge:** As a class, come up with a recycling pledge that everyone can commit to, like "I pledge to recycle paper, plastic, and cans every day!"
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Extension Activities:

1. Home Recycling Challenge: Send home a recycling checklist for students to fill out with their family. Have them track what they recycle for a week.
2. Recycling Scavenger Hunt: Create a scavenger hunt for students to find items around their home that can be recycled.
3. School Recycling Drive: Organize a school-wide clothing or bottle recycling drive in honor of America Recycles Day.

Suggested Books:

- "Why Should I Recycle?" by Jen Green – A simple explanation of the importance of recycling for young children.
- "Michael Recycle" by Ellie Bethel – A superhero helps a town clean up by recycling.
- "The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle: A Story About Recycling" by Alison Inches – Follows the life of a plastic bottle from creation to recycling.
- "One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia" by Miranda Paul – A real-life story of recycling's impact in another part of the world.