



## **Giving Back to the Planet**

### **December 2024 Lesson Plan: Elementary**

**Grade Level:** Elementary

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Subject Areas:** Science, Social Studies, Art

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#### **Lesson Overview:**

In this engaging and hands-on lesson, students will explore the concept of "Giving Back to the Planet" by learning about the impact of waste and discovering simple actions to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Through interactive activities, students will sort recyclables, reflect on their personal role in helping the environment, and create a meaningful eco-resolution. They'll also craft upcycled ornaments or gifts, combining creativity with environmental awareness. By the end of the lesson, students will understand that small actions can make a big difference for the planet, especially during the holiday season.

#### **Objectives:**

By the end of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand how waste impacts the environment, especially during the holidays.
  2. Identify simple ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
  3. Create a personal eco-resolution to help the planet.
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#### **Materials:**

- Pictures of overflowing landfills and recycling bins (printouts or slides)
  - Old magazines, fabric scraps, bottle caps, or other recyclable materials
  - Scissors, glue, markers, string, and craft supplies
  - A large cutout or poster labeled "The Giving Tree"
  - Copies of the **"Give Back to the Planet" Worksheet**
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## 1. Introduction (15 minutes)

**Topic:** Holiday Waste and How We Can Help the Planet

- Begin with a discussion: "What happens to trash after we throw it away?"
- Show a picture of a landfill and ask: "What do you see? How does this make you feel?"
- Explain the concepts of reducing, reusing, and recycling with simple examples:
  - Reduce: Use less wrapping paper or turn off lights.
  - Reuse: Make crafts from old items.
  - Recycle: Sort paper, cans, and plastic into bins.
- Introduce the idea of an "eco-resolution," where we each make a promise to help the planet in our own way.

### Discussion Questions:

- What can we do instead of throwing things away?
  - How can we make the holidays better for the planet?
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## 2. Group Activity: "What Belongs in the Bin?" (10 minutes)

**Objective:** Teach kids about sorting trash and recyclables.

- Create a "bin sorting game" using printed or physical items like paper, cans, toys, and food waste.
  - Set up two bins: **Recycle** and **Trash**.
  - Have students take turns placing an item in the correct bin.
  - Discuss why some things can be recycled and how this helps the planet.
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## 3. Individual Worksheet: "Give Back to the Planet" (15 minutes)

**Activity:** Students reflect on ways they can personally help the planet during the holiday season.

1. Hand out the worksheet with a blank space for drawing.
  2. Prompt: "What's one thing you can do to give back to the planet during this holiday season? It could be recycling, reusing old things, planting a tree, making sustainable bird feeders for migrating birds, etc.."
  3. Students draw their give-back eco-plan and label it (with teacher assistance if needed).
  4. Encourage students to be creative and share ideas with their neighbors.
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#### 4. Hands-On Craft: "Upcycled Ornaments and Gifts" (15 minutes)

- Students use recyclable materials to create an ornament or small gift.
  - Example projects:
    - Turn a bottle cap into a hanging ornament.
    - Use old fabric scraps to make a mini gift bag.
  - Provide guidance and encourage creativity.
  - Students can take crafts home or display them on a classroom "Giving Tree."
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#### 5. Wrap-Up and Sharing (5 minutes)

- Ask each student to share their worksheet drawing or explain their craft.
  - Highlight that every small action makes a difference and how their eco-resolutions can inspire others.
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### Extension Activities (Optional)

#### 1. Story Time with Eco-Themed Books:

Choose one or more books to read aloud to the class to reinforce the lesson:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss: A classic story about caring for the environment and the consequences of overconsumption.
- *One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia* by Miranda Paul: The inspiring true story of a woman's innovative approach to tackling plastic pollution.
- *What a Waste: Trash, Recycling, and Protecting our Planet* by Jess French: A colorful and informative book about waste and ways to care for the Earth.

#### 2. "Giving Back to the Planet" Class Display:

Create a bulletin board titled "Giving Back to Planet Earth." Post students' worksheet drawings and crafts on the board. Add captions like "Small Actions, Big Impact!" to inspire the school community.

#### 3. Litter Walk and Clean-Up Challenge:

Take the class on a supervised walk around the school grounds. Encourage students to pick up litter and sort items into trash and recycle bags. Discuss the importance of keeping shared spaces clean.

#### 4. Home Connection: Recycle Hunt:

Assign a fun homework activity: Ask students to look for five recyclable items at home and bring in a drawing or list of what they found.



- Optional: Students can share their findings during the next lesson.

5. **Watch a Short Environmental Video:**

Show a brief, age-appropriate video about recycling or protecting the environment, such as:

- *Recycle Rex*: A Disney educational video teaching kids the basics of recycling.
- *The Story of Stuff (Shortened Version)*: Explains the life cycle of materials in an engaging way.