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Earth Day: A Call to Environmental Action

Earth Day, celebrated annually on April 22nd, is a significant event that marks a global call to action for environmental protection and sustainability. Its origins can be traced back to the 1970s environmental movement in the United States, led by Senator Gaylord Nelson. But what exactly is Earth Day, and why is it important?

Earth Day emerged from a growing awareness of the environmental issues facing our planet. In the late 1960s, concerns about pollution, deforestation, and the depletion of natural resources were on the rise. Senator Gaylord Nelson was deeply troubled by these issues and sought to raise public consciousness about environmental problems. His inspiration came after witnessing the aftermath of an oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara in 1969. This devastating event served as a wake-up call, prompting Nelson to take action.

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated in the United States. Millions of people across the country participated in rallies, marches, and educational events to protest against environmental degradation and advocate for change. This groundbreaking event captured the attention of the nation and led to significant developments in environmental policy.

One of the most notable outcomes of the first Earth Day was the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by President Richard Nixon. The EPA was tasked with protecting human health and the environment by enforcing regulations and conducting research on environmental issues. Additionally, Earth Day helped to catalyze the passage of landmark environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, which set standards for air and water quality and established regulations to reduce pollution.

Today, Earth Day continues to serve as a reminder of the importance of environmental stewardship and the need for collective action to address global challenges. It is a day for individuals, communities, and governments around the world to come together and commit to protecting our planet for future generations.

As students, you play a crucial role in shaping the future of our planet. Earth Day is an opportunity for you to learn about environmental issues, engage in meaningful activities, and take action to make a positive impact. Whether it's planting trees, participating in clean-up efforts, or advocating for sustainable practices in your school and community, your actions can help create a more sustainable and resilient world.

Discussion Questions



Reflect on the environmental issues highlighted during the first Earth Day in 1970. How have these issues evolved over time, and what new challenges do we face today?



Discuss the role of youth activism in addressing environmental issues. How can young people make a difference in their communities?



Explore the concept of environmental justice. How do environmental issues disproportionately affect marginalized communities, and what can be done to address these disparities?



Consider the impact of individual actions on the environment. How can small changes in behavior, such as reducing waste or conserving energy, contribute to larger-scale environmental improvements?

BONUS: Brainstorm ideas for Earth Day activities that you can participate in at school or in your local community. How can these activities raise awareness about environmental issues and inspire others to take action?