



Giving Back to the Planet

December 2024 Lesson Plan: Middle School

Lesson Plan: Giving Back to the Planet

Grade Level: Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Duration: 60-75 minutes

Subject Areas: Science, Social Studies, Environmental Education

Lesson Overview:

In this lesson, middle school students will explore the environmental impact of waste, particularly around the holiday season, and learn how individual actions can contribute to a more sustainable world. Through discussions, activities, and reflection, students will examine the principles of reducing, reusing, and recycling and create a "Giving Back Eco-Plan" to take actionable steps for improving the environment. The lesson will emphasize the importance of sustainability and empower students to think critically about how their choices affect the planet.

Materials Needed:

- Infographic on the environmental impact of waste (printouts or slides)
 - Sample items for sorting (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, food waste)
 - Copies of the worksheet: "Eco-Plan Reflection"
 - Whiteboard or chart paper
 - Markers, glue, and recyclable materials for optional crafts
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1. Introduction (15 minutes)

Topic: Environmental Challenges and Holiday Waste

- Begin with a statistic: "Did you know Americans throw away 25% more trash during the holidays?"
- Discuss the environmental impact of excess waste, focusing on landfill overflows, resource depletion, and pollution.
- Show an infographic or chart breaking down the types of waste generated during the holidays. You can find a good example [here](#):



<https://inhabitat.com/eye-opening-info-graphic-illustrates-how-much-we-waste-each-holiday-season/>

- Facilitate a brief discussion:
 - What happens to trash after it's thrown away?
 - Why is reducing, reusing, and recycling important?
 - How can holiday traditions become more sustainable?
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2. Group Activity: Waste Sorting Relay (15 minutes)

Objective: Teach students to distinguish between recyclable, compostable, and non-recyclable waste.

- Set up a series of bins labeled: Recycle, Compost, and Trash.
 - Provide students with a mix of sample items (e.g., paper, plastic, food scraps, glass).
 - Divide the class into small groups. Each group has 2 minutes to sort as many items as possible into the correct bins.
 - After the activity, discuss the importance of sorting waste properly and reducing contamination in recycling and composting.
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3. Individual Worksheet: "Eco-Plan Reflection" (20 minutes)

Activity: Students reflect on how they can incorporate sustainability into their everyday lives.

- Hand out the "Eco-Plan Reflection" worksheet, which asks students to reflect on how their actions impact the environment.
 - Worksheet Sections:
 1. What I Already Do to Help the Planet
 - List 3 things you already do to reduce your environmental impact.
 2. Areas I Can Improve
 - Identify 2-3 actions you could take to be more eco-friendly (e.g., reducing plastic use, recycling more, conserving water).
 3. My Giving Back Eco-Plan
 - Write a brief action plan on how you will make a positive impact on the planet. What steps will you take?
 - After completing the worksheet, have students share their eco-plans with a partner or small group.
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4. Optional Craft Activity: "Upcycled Holiday Decorations" (20 minutes)

Objective: Encourage students to create something useful from waste.



- Students use recyclable materials like bottle caps, old magazines, fabric scraps, or plastic bottles to create holiday-themed crafts (e.g., ornaments, gift tags, or cards).
 - Provide guidance and encourage creativity, highlighting how these items can be reused instead of thrown away.
 - If possible, display the crafts in the classroom or have students take them home to share.
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5. Wrap-Up and Discussion (5 minutes)

- Ask students to share one thing they learned from the lesson and one action they plan to implement from their "Giving Back Eco-Plan."
 - Emphasize the importance of continued eco-conscious actions, both in and outside of the classroom.
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Assessment:

- Participation: Active involvement in sorting activity and class discussion.
 - Reflection: Completion of the "Eco-Plan Reflection" worksheet.
 - Creativity: Participation in the optional craft activity, with a focus on sustainability.
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Extension Activities

1. Eco-Plan Class Display:

Create a bulletin board titled "Our Giving Back Eco-Plans." Display students' worksheets and highlight their eco-friendly ideas to inspire others in the school.

2. Eco-Friendly Research Project:

Have students research a specific environmental issue (e.g., plastic pollution, deforestation, or ocean conservation). They can present their findings to the class, along with possible solutions and ways to reduce impact.

3. Documentary Viewing:

Watch a short environmental documentary such as *Before the Flood* or *The Story of Stuff*. Afterward, facilitate a class discussion on what students learned and how they can apply these lessons to their own eco-plans.

4. Recycling Drive:

Organize a recycling drive at school where students can bring in recyclable materials, such as paper, cans, and plastic. Discuss how recycling can help the environment and reduce waste.



5. Litter Cleanup Challenge:

Organize a litter cleanup activity in the school or local community. Have students track how much waste they pick up, and then calculate how many recyclable items they found.