

Environment: Friend or Foe?

ENGLISH – LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS:

Grade 6, Writing 2.2; Grade 7, Reading 2.3; Grades 9/10, Reading 2.3; Grades 9/10, Writing 2.3.

Many of the choices we make can help or hurt the environment. This is even true of common, everyday decisions such as choosing what products to use. Some products are more "environmentally friendly" than others, such as those that are made out of recycled materials or renewable resources. Other products are safe when used properly, but can be hazardous to the environment when used improperly.

Bring several products from home (or use ads for products from the newspaper) and discuss with the class what attributes make these products environmentally friendly, neutral, or potentially harmful. Classify the products in a chart on the board (that might look as follows):

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY	NEUTRAL	POTENTIALLY HARMFUL
Canvas bags Bulk packaged items Non-toxic cleaners	Newspaper (made using recycled/renewable resources)	Lead-free paint (when used/disposed of properly)

Distribute newspapers. Working individually or in small groups, ask students to collect newspaper ads for a wide variety of products. Use advertising inserts as well as the main sections of the newspaper. Encourage students to be creative.

After students have collected at least 20 to 30 ads, have them develop criteria for classifying the products using a chart like the one above. Students should discuss among themselves why they think certain products are environmentally friendly or harmful.

Have students share their results with the class. For each potentially harmful product, ask students to consider potential substitutes or other ways to mitigate the harm.

Bonus: Students can take an inventory of products their family uses at home and make suggestions for more environmentally-friendly products or practices.

Bonus: Students can write to product manufacturers to obtain information about their efforts to make their products environmentally friendly, to use recycled materials, etc. Manufacturers' addresses can be found on product labels or on the Internet.



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