

I Want It! I Need It!

Grades 3-6

Meets Grades 4-6 Standards

Lesson Summary

Students play a sorting game to compare the difference between the things they need and the things they want.

Overview

In this lesson, students will:

- Distinguish between personal wants and needs
- Calculate their own ecological footprint
- Decide how they can lessen their ecological footprint in order to conserve natural resources

Time

60 minutes for lesson

Background

We all have things we want and need. However, depending on who we are and where we live, these might be different than someone else's wants and needs. There are some things all humans need in order to live. For example, in order to survive, we all need air, water and food. These are called **survival needs**, which means we cannot live without them. There are other kinds of needs as well, called **daily needs**. We need things like shoes, clothing and paper to live productive and "normal" lives. Daily needs however, often turn into things we want. While we do need shoes to protect our feet, we don't need fifty pairs of shoes in different styles and colors!

It's fine to have things we want and need. However, it's important to figure out the difference between what we want and what we need, because fulfilling all our wants can impact the environment. Everything we use is made from something found in nature. **Natural resources** come from nature and are used or turned into the things that we want, and the things that we need to survive. Natural resources provide us with our survival needs, such as air, water and food, as well as things we want, such as televisions, toys and soda.

Very often, while trying to get natural resources like trees, oil or minerals from the Earth, human beings destroy nature and animal habitats. So, the more stuff we have, the more nature gets destroyed. Right now we are using our natural resources in an *unsustainable* way. That means that we are using natural resources faster than the Earth makes them available.



Vocabulary

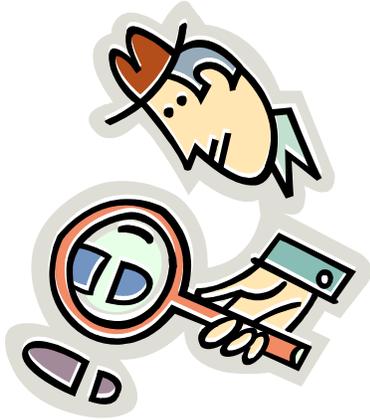
- Survival Needs
- Daily Needs
- Natural Resources
- Unsustainable
- Sustainable
- Ecological Footprint

Materials

- Scissors
- One set of duplicated *Wants and Needs Activity Cards* for each pair of students (originals included at the end of this lesson plan)
- Copies of *What are Natural Resources?* Student Fact Sheet and comprehension questions for each pair of students
- Internet access for each student (at home or school)



We can discover the impact we have on nature by figuring out our **ecological footprint**, or how much nature is needed for our lifestyle. An ecological footprint is a calculation of how many natural resources are needed to produce all the things we use and how our planet absorbs all of the things we throw away.



Our ecological footprint today in the U.S. is much larger than that of someone living two hundred years ago. The reason for this is that populations were smaller, plus it was harder to extract and manufacture resources into useable goods and transport them long distances. In contrast, there are a lot more people on the planet today and we are taking too much from nature too quickly. For example, today many people live in big houses. This means more wood and other materials are needed to build these big houses compared with two hundred years ago, when most people lived in smaller, simpler dwellings.



Human beings' wants and needs have changed a lot over time, primarily due to advances in technology. Industrialization in the form of mines, factories, and transportation systems, allows us to create more stuff faster and cheaper than ever before. Other factors like the media and advertising foster an appetite that increases demand for the products. We all have the power to choose the things we purchase and use. It is important for us to be aware of the difference between our wants and needs and to think of how our consumer choices can lessen our negative impact on the environment. If we *want* to protect nature, then this could be a "want" we prioritize over our want of material goods we don't really need!



Preparation

1. Read background information and the Student Fact Sheet *What are Natural Resources?*
2. Cut the *Wants and Needs Activity Cards* along the dotted lines (students can help do this).
3. Have student pairs take turns reading aloud the Student Fact Sheet, *What are Natural Resources?* and have them answer the comprehension questions.

Pre-Activity Questions

Ask students:

1. If I gave you \$1,000, what are the things that you'd buy? (Write responses on board.)
2. Ask: Ok, now, of all these things, which are things you need? (Mark each with an "N.") Which are things you want? (Mark each with a "W.")
3. What is the difference between needs and wants? (**Survival Needs** are things we must have to survive; **Daily Needs** are not needed to survive, but are things we need to live productive and "normal" lives. **Wants** are things that we would like to have.)



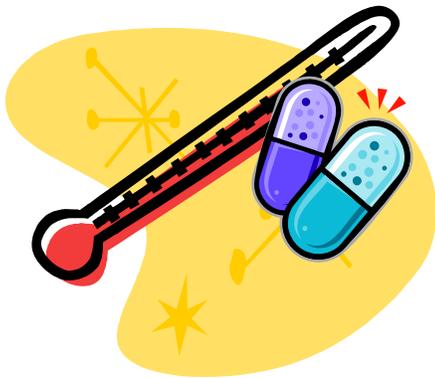
4. Could you live without the things you need? (*No*)
5. Could you live without the things you want? (*Yes*)
6. What are some things that could be both a want and a need? (*Shoes, jackets, water and food are all things we need but can become “wants” when we use too much of them.*)
7. Do you think different people have different opinions about what they need and want? (*Yes*)
8. Where does everything we have come from? (*Everything we use comes from something originally found in nature.*)
9. What will happen to nature if we keep buying, not just what we need, but endless amounts of the things we want? (*We will lose forests and homes for animals, create more pollution, add to global warming and experience loss of natural resources*)
10. When we take too much from nature does that harm our planet? (*Yes*)
11. How? (*When we log for wood, drill for oil and mine for metals, we harm forests, oceans and other natural areas that are homes to many plants and animals. The equipment used to do these things also creates air pollution, which makes global warming happen.*)



Class Activity: Needs & Wants

1. Divide students into pairs and give them a set of the *Wants and Needs Activity Cards*. Ask students to sort the cards according to what they consider their own wants and needs, keeping in mind that needs can be “survival” or “daily”.
2. Remind students that there are certain things called survival needs, which everyone no matter where they live, absolutely must have in order to stay alive. Ask students to share with the class what some of their “survival needs” were. (*list answers on board and discuss*).
3. Ask students which of the things on the cards are daily needs – the things we need to live productive and “normal” lives. (*list answers on board and discuss*).
4. Explain that wants are the things we like to have but don’t need to have to survive or live “normal” lives. For example, many students may want video games but they don’t *need* them. Ask students which of the things on the cards are wants (*list answers on board and discuss*).
5. Have students explain what they think the differences would be if they compared their wants and needs to those of someone living two hundred years ago or the Californian indigenous tribes like the Miwok and Ohlone. Do we have more daily needs today than people did in the past? Do we have different “wants”? Is it easier for us to fulfill our needs and wants? Why? Have them share their answers with the class. (*If students are struggling with this, ask them to think about how we get our water, how we stay warm, how we communicate with people and how we are entertained, compared to people in the past.*)





Follow-Up Activity: Ecological Footprint

1. Ask students to define “footprint.” (*The mark our foot leaves on the ground after we step on it.*)
2. Ask what they think an ecological footprint is. Take guesses and then explain. (*An ecological footprint is how much nature a person’s lifestyle requires. It calculates how much land and water is needed to support what someone uses and throws away.*)
3. Have students complete an online ecological footprint quiz and instruct them to record their score in their notebook. <http://www.islandwood.org/kids/impact/footprint/index.php>
4. What is their footprint score and what does it mean?
5. Ask if it is larger than they thought it would be. Why? (*Explain that everything we use is made from something found in nature, called natural resources. **Natural resources come from nature and are used or turned into the things that we want and need to survive.** The more we use, the larger our footprint, especially when using fossil fuels for energy, or to transport ourselves or the things we buy from afar.*)
6. Ask what are some examples of natural resources. (*Sun, water, trees, plants, and fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas.*)
7. Explain that an *unsustainable* lifestyle is one where we use natural resources faster than nature can produce or renew them. When this happens, the resource will eventually get completely used up. In a sustainable world, we only take from nature as much as it can supply.
8. Ask students, according to their personal ecological footprint, if their lifestyle is sustainable.
9. Ask if they think their ecological footprint is bigger or smaller than that of someone living two hundred years ago. (*Bigger*) Why? (*People in today’s world consume much more stuff and use fossil fuels for just about everything. Fossil fuels leave a huge ecological footprint. Plus, it’s much easier today for us to buy a lot of stuff we don’t need (“our wants”) and keep wanting—and buying—more.*)
10. Ask students if they think their ecological footprint is bigger or smaller than someone who is part of an indigenous tribe living in the Rainforest of Brazil.
11. Ask if knowing how large their ecological footprint is, makes them feel any differently about their wants and needs.
12. Ask how they can fulfill some of their wants, while having a smaller impact on the environment. (*Talk about stuff like reducing, reusing, recycling and swapping clothes, toys, video games, etc. Explain how eating less meat helps protect nature because it uses less water, energy, and other natural resources. Discuss the idea that there’s a growing*

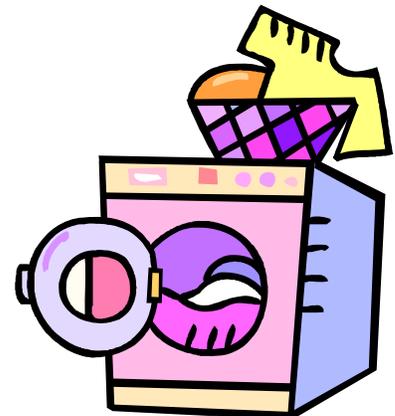
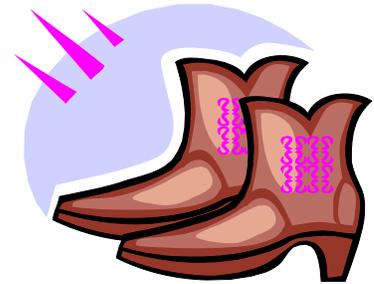
movement where people are choosing to go a month, even a year, without buying anything new except food and medicine—that all things they buy are either second-hand or gotten from friends who didn't need that item anymore. Challenge students to try this for one month and report back to the class what happened and how it felt to not buy anything new for a month.)

13. Ask students to write an essay about one or two things they would like to do to make their ecological footprint smaller and why they chose those things.

OH HELEN, I'M JUST DYING FOR THAT NEW PAIR OF BROWN COWBOY BOOTS WITH THE PINK RHINESTONES. I NEED THEM FOR THE BARBEQUE ON SATURDAY NIGHT!

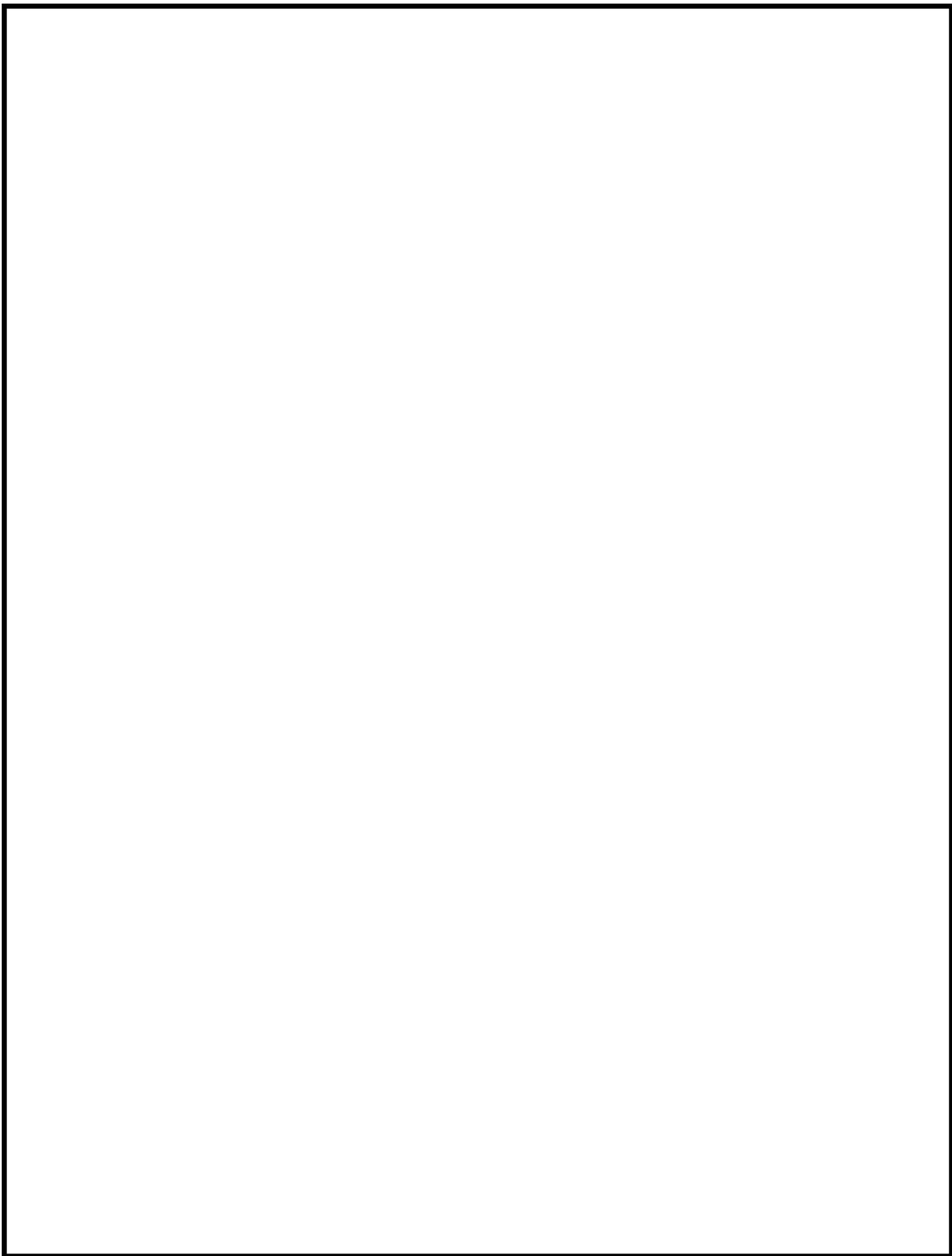
Extensions

- Before conducting this lesson, teach the *Water From the Well* lesson plan, where students learn how water use today varies from 150 years ago. Students re-enact “Pioneer ‘49er Days” when water was limited, and learn about water conservation and how modern conveniences have changed our water use. (Visit www.SFEnvironmentKids.org. Go to the Teacher Lounge. Click on Lesson Plans. Find *Water From the Well*.)
- Ask students to compare the consumption of natural resources between developed and undeveloped countries by making a class collage that includes pictures of the typical “western” lifestyle and of indigenous populations in developing countries. Once the collage is complete, students can write about or discuss the differences they found.
- Conduct the “*Wet*” *Your Appetite* lesson plan, where students learn how much water is needed to produce food. Students analyze a typical American daily diet; estimate how much water is needed to produce food for a day, and design a new menu that conserves water by half. (Visit www.SFEnvironmentKids.org. Go to the Teacher Lounge. Click on Lesson Plans. Find “*Wet*” *Your Appetite*.)
- Conduct the *Earth Pockets* lesson plan, where students trace everyday objects back to the natural resources from which they were made and learn how to conserve natural resources and protect animal habitat. (Visit www.SFEnvironmentKids.org. Go to the Teacher Lounge. Click on Lesson Plans. Find *Earth Pockets*.)



CA State Standards

- Gr. 4** Language Arts RC2.0, LS1.0, LS1.1, W1.0 • History/Social Science 4.2.1
- Gr. 5** Language Arts W1.0
- Gr. 6** Language Arts W1.0 • Science 6, 6b, 6c



Wants and Needs Activity Cards

(Cut along dotted lines)

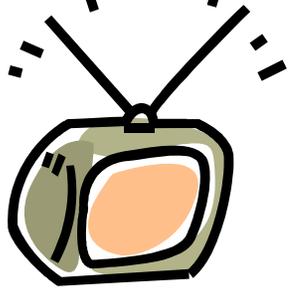


Home

Food



Television

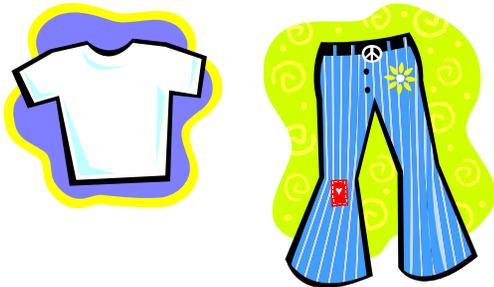


Video Games

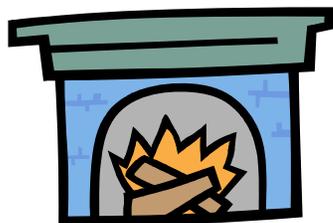
Car



Clothing



Heat

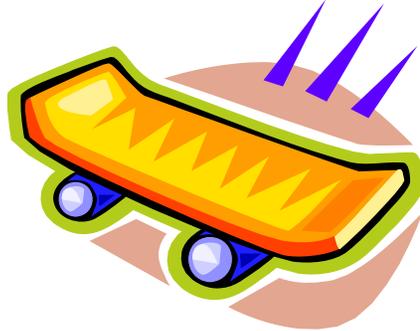


Glasses

Bicycle



Skateboard



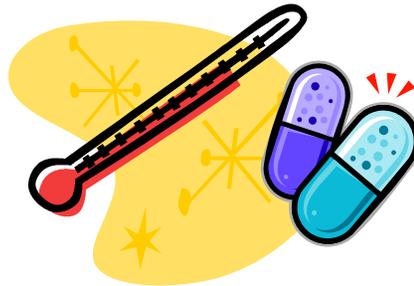
Candy



Electricity



Medicine



Hat



Watch



Water



Computer



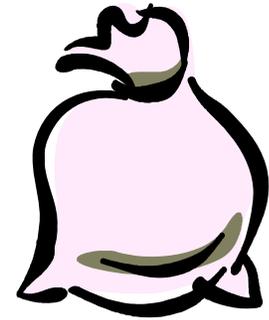
Radio



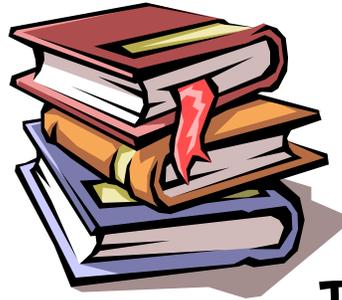
Paper



Plastic Bag



Soda



Books

Air



Toys



Shoes

Lots of Shoes

