

Lesson Plan:

The Importance of Water

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GRADE LEVEL/SUBJECT: Grade 6, World culture studies of Africa and Central/South America.

OVERVIEW: How often do we think about the water we use? We turn on a faucet and we get clean water. Right?

In other parts of the world, it is vastly different. This lesson plan is designed to raise awareness of how accessible water impacts the lives of young people in Africa, Central and South America. A drilled well can change who gets an education (It is girls' work to haul water), life expectancy, personal and communal hygiene, and an entire village's economy from growing of crops to the raising of livestock.

According to a National Geographic article (published April, 2010), in some countries fetching water for family use takes a girl and her mother eight hours a day.

PURPOSE: The following activities would be used during a study of world cultures to help young people understand the connections between all people. It is meant to increase student awareness of global issues particularly as they relate to water.

OBJECTIVE(s):

Students will -

1. identify and discuss how water impacts the lives of African, Central American and South American villagers.
2. Examine how having a well drilled in a village impacts the community. And how once a well is drilled, the time once spent hauling water is now used to grow food, go to school, raise livestock or start a new business enterprise.
3. Become aware of how clean water sources result in healthier families and fewer unnecessary deaths.
4. Acknowledge their own water consumption for bathing, cooking, drinking, common appliances. And brainstorm ideas on how they can conserve water.
5. Understand that freshwater concerns are growing around the world. Learn how water is being shipped from water rich areas to the drought stricken areas at an environmental and economic price.
6. Take on a water related project as a class.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS:

Teacher Resources -

Since 2005, Saratoga Springs, New York resident Karen Flewelling has funded and overseen the drilling of more than a dozen wells in Tanzania, Guinea and Malawi in Africa and in El Salvador, Nicaragua in Central America and Ecuador in South America.

For more information about Karen and her work, visit:

www.karenflewelling.blogspot.com.

On her website, she has photos of her trips and discusses how the drilling of a well impacts the lives of villagers.

Reading- National Geographic Magazine, April 2010. Article titled "The Burden of Thirst" beginning on page 96 about how having water transforms societies in Africa.

Newsweek, October 18, 2010 - Article on water as a commodity, water privatization, infrastructure concerns here and abroad, global water issues and tensions. page 41-46.

ACTIVITIES:

1. View Flewelling's images of a community before a well is dug on Karen Flewelling's website: www.karenflewelling.blogspot.com. Talk about the cleanliness of the water then and how it was used for everything from cooking to bathing. Discuss the inequality of fetching and carrying water as women's work. What is life like for the villagers particularly girls and women.
Role playing ideas: How long does it take to fill a gallon of water here compare to how long it takes in countries where they must walk to the water and carry it home? How heavy is a water filled jerry can? Who can carry it?
Listen to the students' responses and interaction.
2. Show them images of the completed well and how the water was distributed, i.e. Growing crops, school bathrooms and other ways villages improve once water is available. Encourage students to consider the importance of water in the world as it relates to poverty, health and education.
3. Compare water use in USA to water use in other countries. Discuss water use from bathing, to drinking, to cooking and lawn care in their households to how it is valued in water poor areas.
4. H2O Project (www.H2Oproject.org) Project participants agree to forego all beverages except water for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks, the money saved by avoiding soft drinks, etc are put toward the drilling of a well.
5. Understanding the business of water. Read Oct. 18, 2010 Newsweek article for an overview of freshwater as a marketable commodity. Discuss the ideas set forth in the article. For example, the impact water privatization and (in some situations) water scarcity has had and will likely have locally, nationally and globally.

SHARING INFORMATION/SUMMATION:

1. Share all completed products with the class and perhaps the entire student body at a "Water fair."
2. If possible, invite international students to visit the class and talk about water availability.
3. If possible, connect through the Internet with residents/students in Africa/Central America or with others in the United States trying to raise awareness of water issues elsewhere.

By the end of the project, students will likely begun to examine their own water use, become aware of the importance of water to the health and vitality of a community and become aware that something we take as very basic has profound economic and social impact in other parts of the world.

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