



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY

**A FUTURE WORTH LIVING:**

Earth Day and Environmentalism 1962-1990



**OVERVIEW**

Students will investigate primary sources to discover the history and significance of Earth Day and relate it to present-day environmental activism.

**STUDENT GOALS**

- Students will examine a primary text to discover why Earth Day was founded.
- Students will review an iconic image of Earth Day to understand its symbolism.
- Students will explore how environmentalism relates to the five senses during a hands-on activity.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

**Grade 1:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.3

Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

**Grade 6:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

**Grades 11-12:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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## KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

- Environment
  - Pollution
  - The Cold War
  - Iconic
  - Symbolize
  - Senses
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## ACTIVISTS

- Margaret Mead
- Rachel Carson
- Mayor John Lindsay
- Peggy Shepard

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## INTRODUCING RESOURCE 1

**Margaret Mead, “Commemorating Earth Day.” Speech. Earth Day Ceremony, United Nations, March 20, 1977.**

<http://www.earthsite.org/mead77.htm>

Margaret Mead was a cultural anthropologist who attained celebrity in the 1960s and '70s as a women's rights and environmental activist. Mead gave the following speech about Earth Day on March 20, 1977.

*“It makes me feel very humble to be here today and to realize what this day means, because I have lived long enough to see us come to know that we have only one Earth and to come to know that all the people on this planet are one species.*

*This was a matter of hope and of faith before. Not until World War II, when we explored the whole Earth, its deepest valleys and its highest mountains and looked everywhere for the people that were there, did we know for certain that all of us on this planet were one species, human beings. And then as we began to go into space for the first time, to leave this planet for the first time, we came to know that not only were we the only people on this Earth, and all one people, but also that Earth was the only inhabited planet in the solar system— that we were all alone here, all alone to be the custodians of life on this Earth.*

*We used to call it, you know, “the Earth.” Now, we call it “Earth.” And we didn't speak of a “planet” when I was a child. Sometimes we talked of the “globe.” But then we referred to an artificial globe which human beings had made to represent this Earth for them.*

*So that only, in the last quarter of my life, have I, like all those here, come to know what it means to be the custodians of the future of Earth: To know that unless we take care, unless we check the rapacious exploitation of Earth, unless we protect our rivers and our lakes, our oceans and our skies, we are endangering the future of our children and our children's children.*

*We didn't know this, except in little pieces. People knew they had to take care of their own meadows, of their own forests or their own rivers. But it was not until we saw the picture of Earth from the moon that we realized how small and helpless this planet is, something that we must hold in our arms and care for.*

*Earth Day is to be the first completely international and universal holiday that the world has ever known. Every other holiday was tied to one place, or some political or special event. This Day is tied to Earth itself, and to the place of Earth in the whole solar system.*

*At this moment, when I climb the steps and ring the Peace Bell, it will be the Equinox in every part of the world, and we can all celebrate it at once on behalf of every part of the world.”*

Margaret Mead, “Commemorating Earth Day.” Speech. Earth Day Ceremony, United Nations, March 20, 1977. <http://www.earthsite.org/mead77.htm>

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**DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS**

- According to Margaret Mead, what is the purpose of Earth Day?
- What historical events changed the way people viewed the Earth? How did these events inspire the creation of Earth Day?
- Why is Mead's description of Earth Day in 1970 particularly meaningful in the context of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race after World War II through the 1960s?
- While Mead says that Earth Day is an international and universal holiday, why might a city like New York be a good place for environmental activism and a strategic place to launch new environmental initiatives?
- Underline a quote from Mead's speech that you believe is still relevant today. How do you think this quote connects to contemporary environmental concerns and activism?

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**RESOURCE 2**

Unknown, *Earth Day Evolution*, 1970. Associated Press.

Use Margaret Mead's description of Earth Day to examine an iconic image of the inaugural Earth Day. In this photograph, college student Peter Hallerman leans over to smell magnolia flowers in a gas mask that he borrowed from his mother, who acquired the gear when she served in the Red Cross during World War II.



Unknown, *Earth Day Evolution*, 1970. Associated Press.

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**DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS**

- Describe what you see in the photograph.
- What statement is Peter Hallerman making in this photograph? What do you think his mother's mask symbolizes? What do you think the Magnolia flowers symbolize?
- How does this photograph capture the message of Earth Day described in Margaret Mead's speech?
- Why do you think this photograph became the iconic image of Earth Day?

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## RECOMMENDED FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

In 1965, poet Allen Ginsberg coined the slogan “Flower Power” to describe the culture of non-violent protests against the Vietnam War. Hippies embraced this phrase by wearing flower-filled clothing, distributing flowers at protests, and even placing flowers in policemen’s riffles. They used props such as flowers at anti-war protests as a form of street theater to defuse conflict and reduce the fear and anger often associated with protests.

Compare Peter Hallerman’s photograph to the iconic photograph *Flower Power* taken by Bernie Boston in 1967 during the Vietnam War. What are the recurrent themes and symbols in these two images? How might their messages be different? What do their similarities and differences tell us about this historical period?

*Flower Power* by Bernie Boston can be found online through the following link:

<http://www.worcesterart.org/exhibitions/kennedy-to-kent-state/2011-135.html>

## ACTIVITIES

### FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

List the five senses on the board. Ask students to provide examples of what they see, hear, smell, taste, and touch throughout the city and write these answers on the board. Examples could include smelling refuse on garbage day, hearing honking, or seeing parks. Explain that these factors are all a part of their environment. Next, have students vote on which elements of their environment they would like to preserve and which elements they would like to change. Discuss as a group how they could make their environment friendlier to their senses. Create slogans or posters to place around the school that champion one of these environmental issues.

### FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Below are case studies that explore how environmentalism relates to the five senses. Split your class into five groups and ask each group to examine one case study. Encourage the groups to discuss other ways that sense is impacted by environmental changes in the city or worldwide. Next, have each group create a slogan or design a poster that would raise awareness for the environmental causes that they have discussed.

**SMELL** – In New York City, garbage disposal is an important environmental issue. According to Julie Sze in her book *Environmental Justice Activism in New York City*, most garbage facilities in the 1980s and 90s were located in poor and minority communities, which brought pollution and dangerous smells into these neighborhoods. Because of the garbage facilities, 25% of children in some of these communities had asthma, while the citywide rate is 6.9%. Many activist groups came together to stand up for these neighborhoods, arguing that poorer communities should not become the city’s dumping ground. How can we keep the smell of our city clean?


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**SOUND** - As New York City gets louder each year, researchers and activists are becoming more aware about the harm of noise pollution. In 1975, scientist Arline Bronzaft found that schoolchildren in noisier parts of the city did not perform as well as students in quieter neighborhoods, according to Clyde Haberman in his article "Raising Her Voice in Pursuit of a Quieter City: Arline Bronzaft Seeks a Less Noisy New York." After Bronzaft released this study, transit officials cushioned the train rails to make them less noisy, while more insulation was added to classroom walls to make them quieter spaces. Still today, New Yorkers who live in noisier neighborhoods experience more stress, and those who live near airports face greater risk of heart disease. How can we protect the sounds of our city?

**TOUCH** - Part of our sense of touch is our ability to feel temperature. One of the largest environmental issues we face today is global warming. Global warming is the increase in the Earth's atmospheric temperature, which is largely caused by pollution. On September 21, 2014, New York City took center stage as more than 300,000 people marched through the streets in the largest climate change demonstration in history. According to Carl Pope in "To Change Everything We Need Everyone," the march advocated for action from world leaders and average New Yorkers carrying the slogan: "To change everything we need everyone!" Everyone can help fight global warming by using energy-friendly transportation, remembering to turn off the lights in our homes and schools, adding solar panels to our roofs, and eating local food. How else can we protect the temperature of our city and our world?

**TASTE** - An important part of environmental activism is the food movement, which advocates for change in how we eat and farm. Food activists want Americans to produce and consume foods that are healthy, locally grown, organic, and friendly to the environment. In recent years, New Yorkers have joined the food movement through urban agriculture. According to the Five Borough Farm website, there are 700 urban farms and gardens in New York City, located in schoolyards, parks, rooftops, and greenhouses. These urban farms produce healthier food options for New Yorkers, bring neighborhoods together, and are environmentally conscious. How else can we protect our environment through our food?

**SIGHT** - One way that New Yorkers "see green" is through public parks. Public parks take up approximately 14% of New York City's land, providing New Yorkers with a place to come together and experience nature. However, New York City parks did not always look the way they do now. For example, in the 1960s and 70s, Central Park became a center for garbage, graffiti, and crime. According to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation website, parks officials had to tear down trees and shrubbery so that the police could better protect the park's visitors. But in the 1980s, with the motto "You Gotta Have a Park," New York activists began to reclaim the park as a safe and beautiful sanctuary for New Yorkers, a movement described in "'You Gotta Have Park,' A Weekend Celebration" by Peter Kerr. Why do you think it is important to see green in our city? How else can we protect the sights of our city?



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## ADDITIONAL READING

### THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLES

“Millions Join Earth Day Observances Across the Nation” by Joseph Lelyveld, April 23, 1970, describes the energy of the first Earth Day, focusing on the activists’ and politicians’ street tactics in Union Square.

<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9E0DE1DD1E30E03ABC4B51DFB266838B669EDE>

“In the Schools, Pollution is a Dirty Word” by Israel Shenker, April 23, 1970, chronicles Earth Day’s teach-ins, which recruited students from elementary school to college to raise awareness for environmental issues.

<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9B01EFDD1E30E03ABC4B51DFB266838B669EDE>

“The Day the City Caught Its Breath” by McCandlish Phillips, April 23, 1970, shares anecdotes from the inaugural Earth Day, including an 11-year-old girl handing out daisies and the adventures of a giant junk sculpture.

<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9801EFDD1E30E03ABC4B51DFB266838B669EDE>

## CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

“Taking a Call for Climate Change to the Streets” by Lisa W. Foderaro, September 21, 2014, describes the diversity of activists at the climate march in New York City.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/nyregion/new-york-city-climate-change-march.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/nyregion/new-york-city-climate-change-march.html?_r=0)

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