



MODULE 4 Watershed Worries

Notes for the Teacher

Activities Outline:

Activity 1 – *Media Review*

Activity 2 – *It's Debatable*

Subjects/Grades:

Social Studies 8, 9, 10 & 11

Communications 11 & 12

Earth Science 11

Resource Science 11

Science and Technology 11

Geography 12

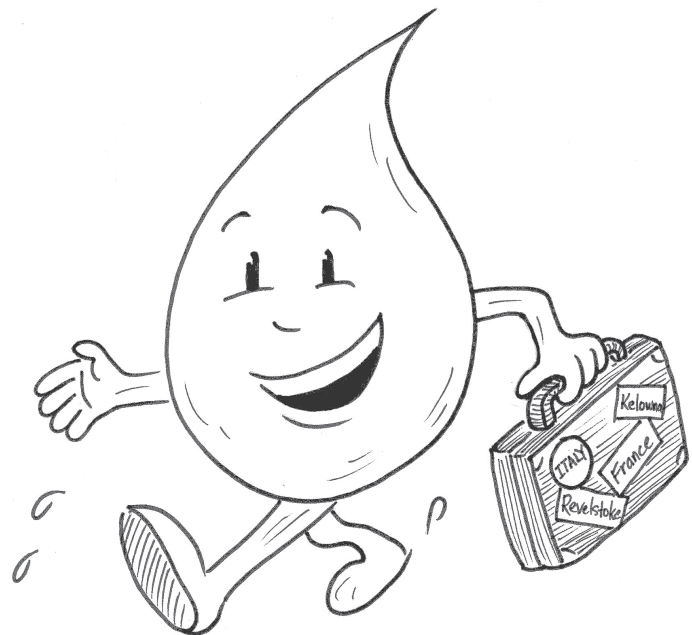
PRESCRIBED LEARNING OUTCOMES

SUBJECT AREA	CURRICULUM ORGANIZER	ACTIVITY
SOCIAL STUDIES 8	Applications of Social Studies _____	Activities 1 and 2
SOCIAL STUDIES 9	Applications of Social Studies _____	Activities 1 and 2
SOCIAL STUDIES 10	Applications of Social Studies _____	Activities 1 and 2
SOCIAL STUDIES 11	Skills and Processes II _____	Activities 1 and 2
COMMUNICATIONS 11	Comprehend and Respond (Critical Analysis) _____	Activity 1
	Communicate Ideas and Information (Improving Communications) _____	Activity 1
	Communicate Ideas and Information (Presenting and Valuing) _____	Activities 1 and 2
	Self and Society _____	Activity 2
EARTH SCIENCE 11	Geological Science (Resources and Environment) _____	Activity 2
RESOURCE SCIENCE 11	Forests and Society _____	Activity 1
SCIENCE AND TECH 11	Resource Management and Environmental Planning _____	Activity 2
	Pollution _____	Activity 2
COMMUNICATIONS 12	Comprehend and Respond (Strategies and Skills) _____	Activities 1 and 2
	Comprehend and Respond (Critical Analysis) _____	Activities 1 and 2
	Communicate Ideas and Information (Composing and Creating) _____	Activity 1
	Communicate Ideas and Information (Presenting and Valuing) _____	Activity 2
	Communicate Ideas and Information (Improving Communications) _____	Activity 2
GEOGRAPHY 12	Resources of the Earth (Nature of Resources) _____	Activity 2
	Resources of the Earth (Sustainability of Resources) _____	Activity 1
	Resources of the Earth (Management of Resources) _____	Activity 2



Introduction

Opinions vary widely on how to interact with, extract from, and protect watersheds. Some even argue about the need to protect wildlife and fresh water sources. Everyone forms their own opinions of course, but often those opinions are a partial result of reading newspapers, watching television, or listening to the radio. As mass media consumers, we are smart if we are able to critically analyze what we take in. Likewise, preparing for a debate is an excellent way to become knowledgeable about watershed issues and challenges. The activities in Module 4, ***Watershed Worries***, explore how we access and obtain information, how we interact with others of opposing viewpoints, and how we derive our conclusions.





ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

In this activity you will:

- Analyze local media pieces for potential bias
- Write an effective letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing your views about a water issue

TIME

4 hours classroom time + 3 weeks or more for homework/research

MATERIALS

- Local, regional or even national newspapers and magazines
- Access to other mass media, including television, radio and the Internet

Activity 1: *Media Review*

First of all...

Much of what we learn about watersheds, water resources and other important environmental and social issues comes from the mass media — newspapers, magazines, television and radio programs, and the Internet. How relevant and accurate is this information? Exactly who is doing the reporting, and is it possible that they have a bias that is reflected in the stories they tell?

An important skill for the budding critical thinker in any arena (not just environmental) is the ability to think critically while being conscious consumers of the mass media. There is, of course, much to learn from using sources such as newspapers or television, as long as we can learn to interpret the information for accuracy, fairness, and potential bias.

Also, the media is a great place to get your own views known. Writing an article in a local newspaper, sending a letter to the editor, or participating in a radio call-in show, are all opportunities to express your own views.

Activity Description

1. Read the “Letters To The Editor” section of the local newspaper (on any issue) for a week to get a sense of what works when drafting a letter, and what sort of letter the editor is likely to publish. Pay attention to length, style, etc.
2. Find articles and/or programs (from newspaper, magazines, radio, television, etc.) about watersheds, water quality or any other water-connection that catches your interest, and read or listen to them! Analyze the content for potential bias or manipulation of statistics. Ask yourself:
 - Who wrote the article (produced the radio show, etc.)?
 - Do they have a particular point of view?
 - Have they quoted a study or statistics? Who did the study? When was it done?
 - What other thoughts or feelings do you have about the article?
 - Can you detect any bias?
 - Is there any discernible slant to the piece?
 - Does this piece grab your attention? Is it effective? Why?
3. Choose a watershed issue of interest to you and track it over time. Try to bring in at least one article or media report on your issue per week. (You can also bring in notes you’ve taken when listening to a





radio or television program on the issue.) Taking turns with your classmates, present a summary of your issue. Did you find one (or more) articles that had a particular bias? Share what you think about the slant of the piece. This way you and your whole class can practice analyzing the media while staying abreast of the issues!

3. Create a one- to two-page written summary to hand in that analyzes the piece in terms of the above questions. Also state your own opinion about the issue.
4. Try to get yourself published or aired! This is a great way to raise important watershed issues and create environmental education, with you as the educator. You may have found that you formed a particular opinion on an issue. If so, consider writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, calling a recorded call-in radio program, or writing an article for the school newspaper about your watershed or water issue. Use what you learned from analyzing the pieces you have read (or listened to) to write your letter. Remember style, length, etc. And remember to be accurate.

Extension Ideas

1. Keep the newspaper or magazine clippings you collected on file and half-way through the school year use the best headlines and photos to make a collage about watershed issues.
2. Interview a journalist — someone who researches and writes environmental pieces for the newspaper, magazine, radio, television, etc. Ask them questions such as:
 - Where do you get your information?
 - How do you deal with facts and statistics?
 - How do you handle your own personal bias on issues?
 - What do you think of the mass media as an educational tool?



The medium is the message.

—MARSHALL McLuhan

Key Words

Bias: a mental leaning or inclination; partiality, prejudice, bent.

Mass media: those means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people, especially newspapers, popular magazines, radio, and television.

Slant: to distort in writing or telling so as to express a particular bias.

Values: the social principles, goals or standards accepted or held by an individual, class, society, etc.



ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE

In this activity you will:

- Carry out a formal debate using the practical debate rules
- Know your subject, both pros and cons
- Be able to listen respectfully and effectively to opposing viewpoints

TIME

1 hour + research

MATERIALS

- Debate rules for all to follow
- Tables and chairs arranged for debate
- Assessment forms for each student to fill out

Activity 2: *It's Debatable*

First of all...

Debating is a valuable exercise. It both sharpens your knowledge about an issue, and increases your ability to articulate views on the issue. It also allows you to really see the other side of the issue (sometimes even support it, even if you don't necessarily agree with it entirely). It is amazing to discover that the other side has some relevant and valid points too! Learning to listen respectfully, think critically and reason soundly are other skills learned by participating in a good, rousing debate.

Water and watershed resource issues are some of the most contentious environmental issues today. Heated debates continue over such water issues as the use of pesticides and herbicides, watering restrictions in towns and cities, irrigation restrictions for farms, charging more for water usage in the home, logging restrictions near riparian zones and in watersheds, strict and severe penalties for water contamination, and the need for Watershed Reserves.





Activity Description

1. As a class, divide into pairs. With your partner, choose a debate topic from the *Sample Debate Topics* (page 64), and decide which of you will represent the pro side of the issue and which will represent the con side. Or, make up your own topic, remembering that it must have opposing viewpoints. Try to choose topics that relate to social, political, or ethical issues regarding water conservation, watershed testing, watershed protection, or watershed use. It is just as useful to support what you don't agree with, and in fact, it might even be advantageous to argue against your personal view because you are already acquainted with the opposition's arguments!
2. Research your proposed debate topic. Gather as much background information as possible. See *Timing Your Debate* (page 65) to develop your time frame for speaking.
3. Debate! Get together with your partner and debate your issue. What did you learn about your opponent's viewpoint? Did you learn new information that changed your perspective on the issue?
4. Using what you learned, both from your own side and the side of your partner, write up a brief report outlining the issue, the different perspectives of the story, and if possible, a consensus or agreement that you might have reached.
5. Using the information in the box entitled *Evaluating the Debate* (page 65) assess your classmates' debating techniques and the effectiveness of their presentations. What did you learn from others that works well?

Three things matter in a speech; who says it, how it is said, and what is said — and, of the three, the last matters the least.

—JOHN MORLEY

Key Words

Debate: to take part in a formal discussion in which opposing sides of a question are argued.

Rebuttal: to contradict, refute or oppose, especially in a formal manner by argument, and proof.

Refute: to use evidence to prove an argument or statement to be false or wrong.



Sample Debate Topics

- Residents throughout the province should be charged higher rates for household water usage
- The government should spend more money in the next few years creating Watershed Reserves
- Corporations should be allowed to pollute water bodies in B.C. if doing so is necessary for them to make a profit
- There should be no more large-scale dams built in B.C.
- Sport fishing should be banned
- Residents of a community watershed should use blockades if they oppose logging or other development in the watershed
- Fish farming is an environmentally responsible method of raising salmon

You can also think up some topics for your own local issues!



Evaluating the Debate

Use some or all of the criteria below to assess the debates you observe.

DELIVERY

- Was eye contact maintained?
- Was the issue communicated with enthusiasm and conviction?
- Were visual aids used?
- Was respect shown for opponents?

INTRODUCTION

- Did it gain attention and arouse interest in the issue?
- Was the topic introduced clearly and were main points explained?

DEBATE TECHNIQUE

- Was the argument integrated well between the debate partners?
- Did they recognize and challenge flaws in their opponents' arguments?
- Were questions responded to effectively?
- Were the main points supported with relevant material?
- Was there a good conclusion (that reinforced the central ideas)?

THE WRITTEN REPORT

- Is it clear and well organized?
- Is it concise?
- Is there a good introduction, a body, and a conclusion?
- Are sources of information listed?

TIMING YOUR DEBATE

Team A: Initial, constructive speech
— 5 minutes

Team B: Initial, constructive speech
— 5 minutes

Team A: Rebuttal
— 3 minutes

Team B: Rebuttal
— 3 minutes

Team A: Closing remarks
— 2 minutes

Team B: Closing remarks
— 2 minutes

Total time: 20 minutes