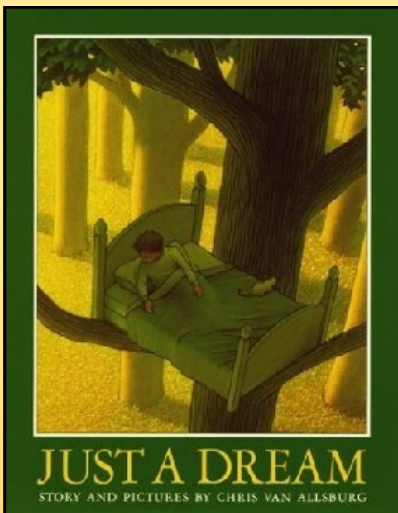


# Just a Dream to Save Our Planet



## Activities to Explore Environmental Issues

based on  
Chris Van Allsburg's  
**Just a Dream**



**Laura Candler**

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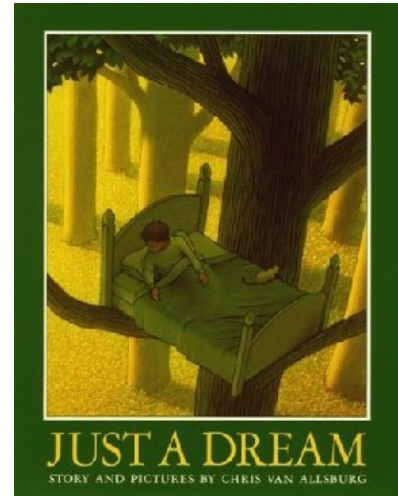
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# Just a Dream to Save our Planet

## Exploring Environmental Issues

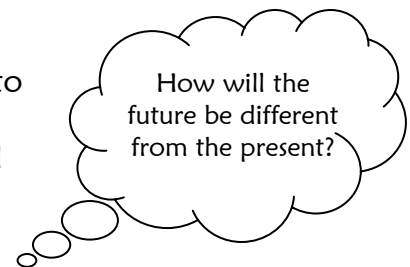
Lesson Plan by Laura Candler



**Just a Dream to Save Our Planet** is a collection of activities to explore environmental issues based on the classic book by Chris Van Allsburg. *Just a Dream* was written by Chris Van Allsburg back in 1990, but its message of the importance of taking care of our Earth still holds true today. In this story, Walter is careless with his trash and scoffs at planting trees to help the environment. Then he has a dream that takes him to the future where he discovers an Earth that's uninhabitable due to air and water pollution. When he wakes up from his dream, he realizes the importance of taking care of the Earth. You can use all of the activities below or just a few of them depending on your available time and the level of your students. Many of the activities work well in cooperative learning groups.

### Suggested Lesson Sequence

- 1. Think-Pair-Share** - Before reading the story, ask students to think for a moment about how their future might be different from the present. How will we travel? Where will we live? What will our planet look like? Then ask them to turn and discuss their ideas with a partner. Finally, call on several students to share their thoughts with the class.
- 2. Read and Make Predictions** - Then tell them that a boy named Walter imagined what the future might be like, but then he had a dream that showed him a future he could never have imagined! This story is perfect for making predictions because Walter's dreams take him to many different places. Each time he goes to a new place, the author gives us a tiny hint about the next location in the form of a small picture. Show the picture to your students and ask them to predict where Walter's dream will take him next and what he will discover.
- 3. Discuss Environmental Issues** - After your students have listened to the story, use the eight Discussion Cards to discuss issues related to the story. You can use the Think-Pair-Share strategy described in Step 1, the Talking Sticks strategy you'll find on Teaching Resources, on the Mini Pack Page page, or another cooperative learning discussion strategy.



4. **Prepare for Environmental Sorting Activity** - Ask students to think about the events of Walter's dream. Give each team one set of Just a Dream Sorting Cards and an Environmental Issues graphic organizer. Have students cut apart the cards and place them face down in the middle of the organizer.

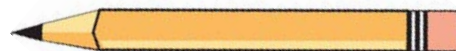
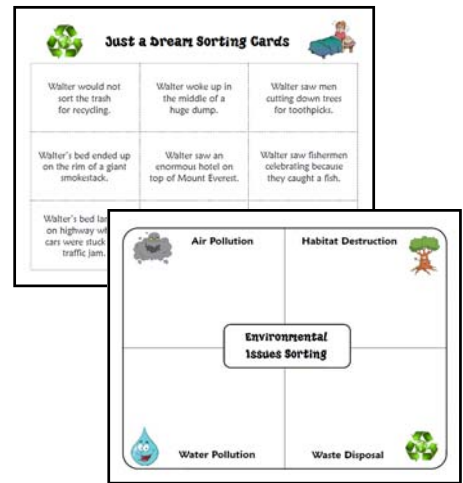
5. **Introduce Terminology** - Each event corresponds to one of the following types of environmental problems. Briefly explain the following terms to your students:

- Air Pollution
- Water Pollution
- Habitat Destruction
- Waste Disposal

6. **Sort Events By Environmental Issues** - Now ask your students to take turns sorting the event cards according to the related environmental issue. The first person on each team flips over the top card and reads the sentence aloud, for example, "Walter would not sort the trash for recycling." Ask them to think about which category the card goes into and place it face up on the sorting mat in that spot. The rest of the team gives a thumbs up if they agree or they discuss the event until at least the majority of them agree. Some cards can go into more than one location, so tell them to simply pick the issue that it MOST fits. A few of the cards don't fit into any of the categories very well, so you can ask students to make up a new category for those. The same directions are followed for each card, with students taking turns around the team.

7. **Research Problems and Solutions** - Finally, ask students to research these four issues to find out more about the problems related to each issue (the causes) and some possible solutions, including new technologies being explored by scientists as well as actions by citizens. If you are familiar with the Jigsaw cooperative learning activity, you can give each team member a different Environmental Problem-Solution graphic organizer as a note-taking tool. Have them research their topic, list their findings for each area, and share the results with their team. Or you can give each student a copy of all four graphic organizers and spend class time discussing each issue and recording notes. You'll find a blank graphic organizer you can use for additional topics such as Energy Conservation.

8. **Writing Activity** - As a culminating activity or for assessment purposes, ask students to write a paragraph on each of the four issues. In each paragraph, they should outline the problems and possible solutions related to that environmental issue.



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# Just a Dream Discussion Cards

#1

Before Walter had his dream, what did he imagine the future would be like?

#2

How did Walter's feelings about planting a tree change from the beginning of the story to the end?

#3

Why should we plant trees? How are they helpful to our planet?

#4

Why were the fisherman celebrating when all they caught was one little fish?

# Just a Dream Discussion Cards

#5

How did Walter's behaviors change after he woke up from his first dream?

#6

Where did Walter end up in his second dream? How was this dream different from the first?

#7

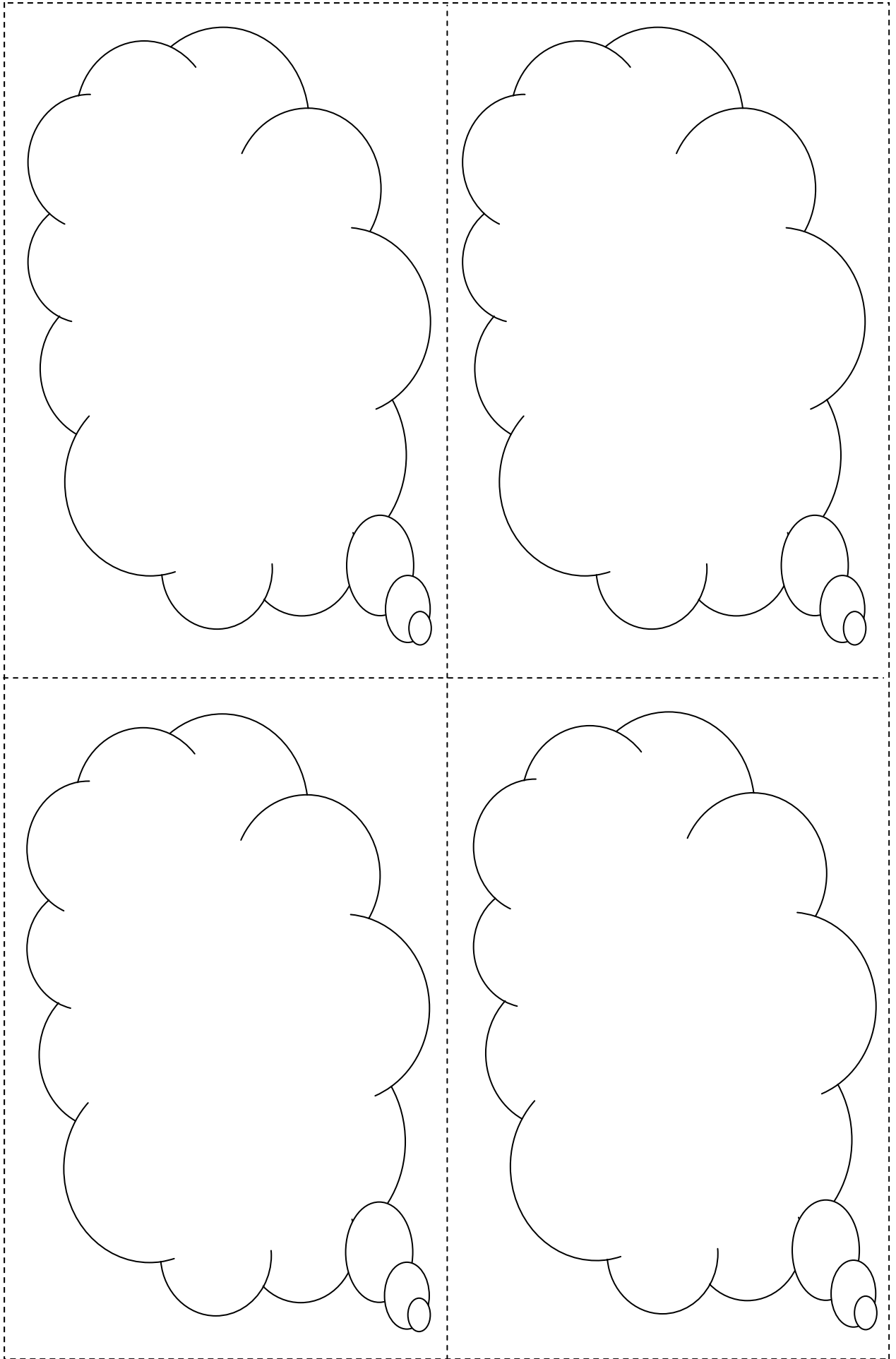
Just a Dream was written in 1990. How might the book have been different if it had been written in the last year?

#8

What actions can we take now so that our future doesn't turn out like Walter's first dream?



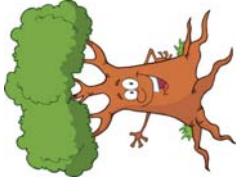
# Just a Dream Discussion Cards



**Air Pollution**



**Habitat Destruction**



**Environmental  
Issues Sorting**

**Water Pollution**



**Waste Disposal**





# Just a Dream Sorting Cards



Walter would not sort the trash for recycling.

Walter woke up in the middle of a huge dump.

Walter saw men cutting down trees for toothpicks.

Walter's bed ended up on the rim of a giant smokestack.

Walter saw an enormous hotel on top of Mount Everest.

Walter saw fishermen celebrating because they caught a fish.

Walter's bed landed on a highway where cars were stuck in a traffic jam.

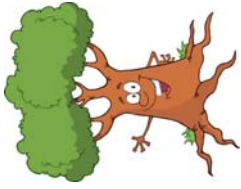
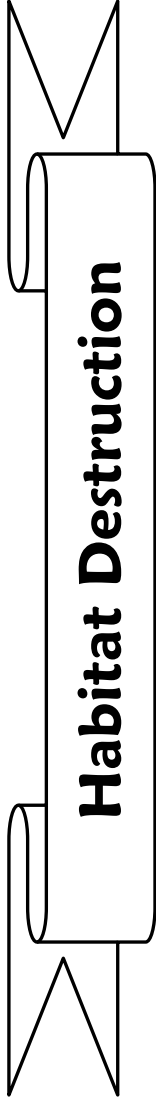
Walter stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon and couldn't see it because of smog.

A duck landed on Walter's bed because it couldn't find the pond where it used to land.



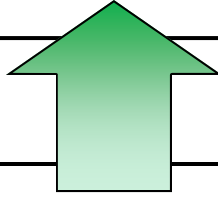
# Exploring Environmental Issues

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Problem(s)**

A large rectangular box with a black border, containing 15 horizontal lines for writing.

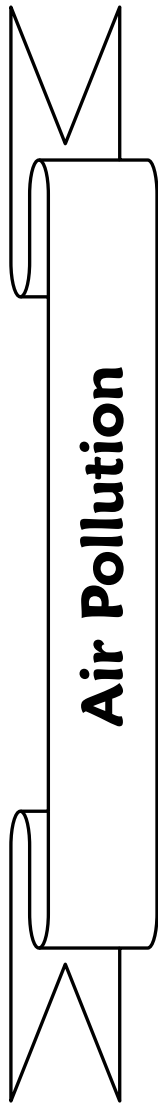


**Solutions(s)**

A large rectangular box with a black border, containing 15 horizontal lines for writing.

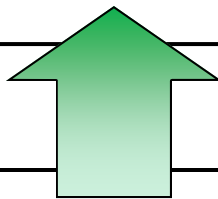
# Exploring Environmental Issues

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Problem(s)**

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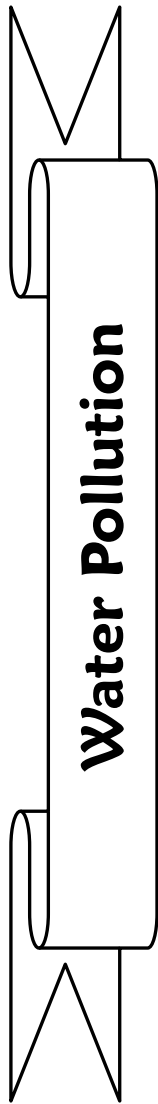


**Solutions(s)**

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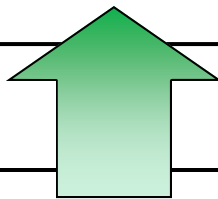
# Exploring Environmental Issues

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Problem(s)**

A large rectangular box with horizontal lines for writing, intended for describing environmental problems.

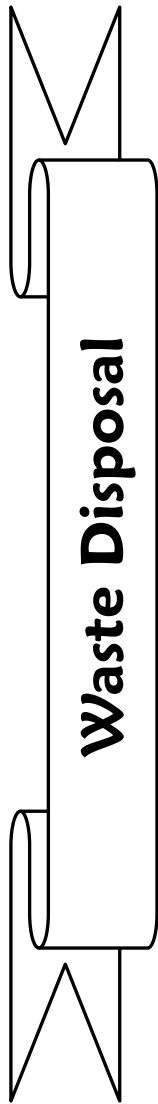


**Solutions(s)**

A large rectangular box with horizontal lines for writing, intended for describing solutions to the environmental problems.

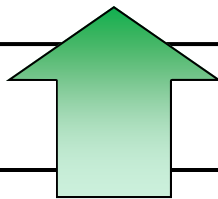
# Exploring Environmental Issues

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Problem(s)**

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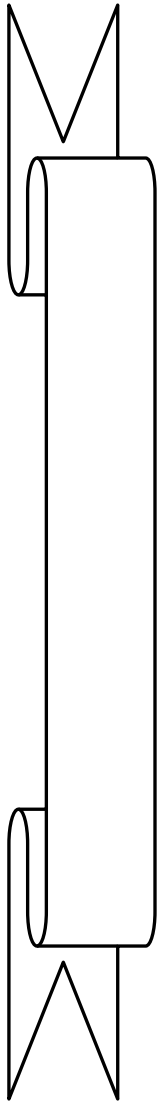


**Solutions(s)**

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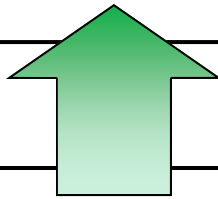
# Exploring Environmental Issues

Name \_\_\_\_\_



**Problem(s)**

A large rectangular box with horizontal lines for writing, intended for describing environmental problems.



**Solutions(s)**

A large rectangular box with horizontal lines for writing, intended for describing solutions to the environmental problems.



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Teaching Multiple Intelligence Theory

Bingo Showdown:

Confusing Words Review

Character Bio Reports

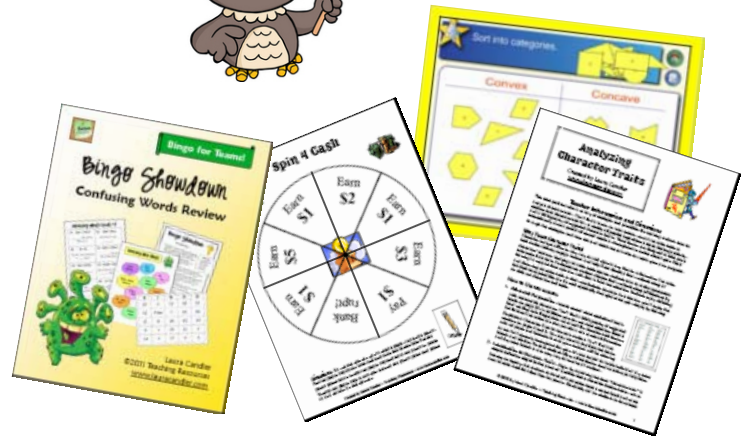
Analyzing Character Traits

Powerful Poetry Combo

Plural Noun Showdown

Sentence Go Round

Writing Powerful Poetry



Geometry: Exploring the Basics

Math Stations for Middle Grades (3-8)

Mastering Math Facts

Polygon Explorations

Polygon Explorations (Smartboard)

Place Value Spinner Games

Fraction Spinner Games

Simplify and Snap Fraction Game

Order of Operations Bingo

## Seasonal Teaching Packs

October

November

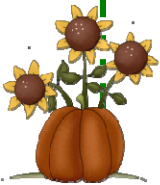
December

January

February (Free!)

March

April



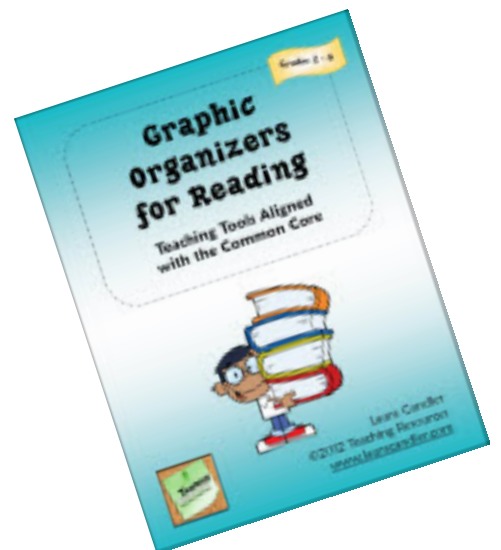
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