Just a Dream to Save Our Planet

Activities to Explore Environmental Issues based on Chris Van Allsburg’s Just a Dream

Laura Candler ©2012 Teaching Resources
www.lauracandler.com www.corkboardconnections.com
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.

For more free teaching resources, please visit me here …..

- **TeachersPayTeachers store**
  [http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Laura-Candler](http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Laura-Candler)

- **Teaching Resources Website**
  [http://www.lauracandler.com](http://www.lauracandler.com)

- **Corkboard Connections Blog**
  [http://www.corkboardconnections.com](http://www.corkboardconnections.com)
#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?
#6
Where did Walter end up in his second dream? How was this dream different from the first?

#5
How did Walter’s behaviors change after he woke up from his first dream?

#8
What actions can we take now so that our future doesn’t turn out like Walter’s first dream?

#7
Just a Dream was written in 1990. How might the book have been different if it had been written in the last year?
### Just a Dream Sorting Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walter would not sort the trash for recycling.</th>
<th>Walter saw men cutting down trees for toothpicks.</th>
<th>Walter’s bed ended up on the rim of a giant smokestack.</th>
<th>Walter stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon and couldn’t see it because of smog.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walter woke up in the middle of a huge dump.</td>
<td>Walter saw fishermen celebrating because they caught a fish.</td>
<td>Walter would not sort the trash for recycling.</td>
<td>A duck landed on Walter’s bed because it couldn’t find the pond where it used to land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter saw an enormous hotel on top of Mount Everest.</td>
<td>Walter’s bed landed on a highway where cars were stuck in a traffic jam.</td>
<td>Walter saw fishermen celebrating because they caught a fish.</td>
<td>Walter’s bed ended up on the rim of a giant smokestack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploring Environmental Issues

Habitat Destruction

Problem(s)

Solutions(s)

Name _________________________
Exploring Environmental Issues

Air Pollution

Problem(s)

Solutions(s)

Name _________________________
If you enjoyed this free teaching resources pack, you might also enjoy some of my popular ebooks and lessons. You can purchase them from my store on TeachersPayTeachers.com by clicking the links below or by visiting my Teaching Resources website: www.lauracandler.com.

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
Teaching Resources Website

www.lauracandler.com

Ready-to-Use Resources for Teachers!

- Free printables and activity sheets
- Lesson plans and teaching strategies
- Cooperative learning methods
- Classroom management and motivation
- Literacy & Reading Workshop strategies
- Mathematics instructional resources
- Weekly Newsletters

Are you on Facebook? If so, check out Teaching Resources for new ideas:
www.facebook.com/TeachingResources

Discover Laura’s Teaching Resources . . .

- Digital eBooks and lessons you can download from www.lauracandler.com and print or use on a Smartboard!
- Each book, ebook or lesson pack includes ready-to-use directions, printables, and teaching tips!
- Popular titles include:
  - Mastering Math Facts
  - Daily Math Puzzler Series
  - Math Stations for Middle Grades
  - Laura Candler’s Power Reading Workshop

Created by Laura Candler
Milken Educator

© 2012 ~ Created by Laura Candler ~ Teaching Resources ~ www.lauracandler.com