An Educator's Guide for

What Does It Mean to Be Green?

By Rana DiOrio, Illustrated by Addy Rivera Sonda



A Discussion & Activity Guide for Grades Kindergarten, 1, 2, and 3

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Discover all the ways that children can help protect the Earth and its precious resources in this brand new edition of the empowering and award-winning *What Does It Mean to Be Green?*! Features all new artwork and updated facts, tips, and more.

What does it really mean to be green? The answers might surprise you! From turning off the water while you brush your teeth to walking to the park instead of driving and even recycling or reusing old artwork, there are all kinds of things kids can do to help keep the Earth clean and healthy! With lots of amazing facts and helpful tips, readers will learn all about how their small choices can make a big difference—kids can change the world!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Rana DiOrio grew up in Rhode Island, went to college in North Carolina, and attended law school in Tennessee. It wasn't until she moved to California's environmentally conscious Bay Area, however, that she started developing her own appreciation of what it means to be green. She realized that we all have the power to change the way we live to be respectful of, and grateful for, Mother Earth, helping her to thrive. Rana has written her way through life—as a student, lawyer, banker, investor, and now, as an author and entrepreneur. Her interests include fitness training, practicing yoga, reading nonfiction and children's books, dreaming, walking along beaches, effecting positive change, and, of course, being global, green, present, safe, kind, entrepreneurial, and American, like the other books in her What Does It Mean to Be...?® series

Addy Rivera Sonda is a Mexican illustrator, who loves color, learning, and exploring ways in which we could build a kinder and more sustainable world. Her biggest inspiration for drawing is that she knows stories and art are slowly but surely changing the way people understand themselves and perceive others, building empathy and a more inclusive world.

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OVERVIEW

In *What Does It Mean To Be Green?*, author Rana DiOrio explores the myriad realms in which children can develop an understanding of how to protect the Earth and its treasured natural resources. In a lighthearted way, the book begins with several examples of what being green is NOT.

From there the book addresses more serious topics and offers a springboard for teachers to develop children's exploration of what it means to be "green," including making conscious decisions to:

- Conserve natural resources, such as water and energy
- Use alternate forms of transportation that limit pollution emissions
- Choose reusable packaging for carrying items from place to place
- Recycle a wealth of materials ranging from beverage containers to gently used clothing
- Repurpose available resources, including food scraps and rain water
- Spread the word about being green

The text introduces children to the habits that contribute to an environmentally responsible lifestyle. *What Does It Mean To Be Green?* promotes the essential message that as citizens of the world, we have both the capacity and the obligation to protect the Earth's precious resources.

Classroom activities in this instructional unit facilitate children's consideration of how they may (or may not!) be protecting the Earth's resources in their day-to-day experiences, as well as specific actions they can take to be more "green" throughout their lives. These activities draw on students' experiences as individuals, as well as their experiences as members of a family, a classroom, a school, and a community. The instructional activities also enable teachers to cultivate children's character development through the pillars of community, mindfulness, and responsibility.

This unit includes three lesson plans as well as supplemental online resources to augment the more straightforward projects. The design of each plan allows teachers to build and embellish the activities to a level that best suits the needs of their classroom. Each lesson can be taught in class as described, though options for an extension activity and an integrated community project are included.

At each grade level, the lessons align with the Common Core State Standards Initiative for Speaking & Listening (http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy). The Common Core is used by the majority of states and is especially pertinent for educators in the United States.

What Does It Mean To Be Green? is a picture book printed on FSC paper, which ensures the paper is from responsibly managed forests that also provide environmental, social, and economic benefits.

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PROJECT I: GOING GREEN VIA ENVIRONMENTAL BEAUTIFICATION

Background

Rainforests are being cut down at the rate of one hundred acres per minute. Not only does this process diminish the Earth's natural beauty, it's also detrimental for the world's oxygen supply. Plants and trees absorb the carbon dioxide we exhale and produce the oxygen we need to live. When we reduce the number of trees in our environment, we ultimately reduce our oxygen supply. Preserving these natural resources is critical to maintaining the beauty of our environment.

On average, each of us produces approximately five pounds of trash a day. This is a frightening amount of waste in and of itself, but what's worse is that this refuse often doesn't make it to a suitable garbage receptacle. Where does it end up? In our neighborhood, our parks, or our water supply, which can lead to illness for people, plants, and animals. Disposing of trash properly is another critical element in environmental beautification. Every one of us can act individually and collectively to maintain the beauty of our environment, thereby making the world a greener place.

Objectives

- Students will develop awareness of specific actions they can take to help beautify their environment and of the related benefits these actions provide for our Earth.
- Students will participate in green activities designed to help beautify their home, school, and community.
- Students are empowered to spread the word to friends and family members about how they might all become more green and protect the Earth's precious resources by contributing to the beautification of the community.

Focal Activity

Guiding Questions

- What are some things that you like to see when you spend time out and about in your community?
- What do you find beautiful in your community?
- How would you feel if there were no plants, trees, or parks around your home, school, or neighborhood?
- Have you ever planted something before? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever helped clean something up before? How did it make you feel?

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- Have you ever created something beautiful for others to see? How did it make you feel? How did it make other people feel?
- How do you feel when you see trash on the ground?
- Why do you think people litter?
- What do you think happens to the trash on the ground that never gets picked up by anyone?

Classroom Activity

Provide materials for each student to plant a tree seedling in a small pot in class. Use terra cotta (as opposed to disposable plastic) pots that can be reused for potting additional plants at a later time. Once the seedlings begin to grow, students can take their plants home to plant in their yard or the community. (It's important to consider that not all students will have a suitable place to plant the seedling at home.) Students can track the growth of their trees, share this growth with the class, and discuss the collective contribution that their trees are making to the community in terms of clean air and natural beauty.

As an alternate activity, students can plant a class tree on the school campus. Students can take turns with various roles needed to cultivate the tree's growth (e.g., watering, pruning, providing food). You might choose to visit the tree every week for class activities such as story time or picnics.

Extension Activity

Take students on a field trip intended to clean up the community. This might be a walking trip into town or a bus trip to a local natural habitat (e.g., beach, park, preserve) in need of assistance. Enlist the help of parents and community members. Encourage students to identify materials that need to be thrown away as well as those that can be recycled. Provide each student with a set of gloves and bags. To make the cleanup more eco-friendly, you might also solicit donations of biodegradable bags to collect the trash and recyclable materials. Students can work in partners or teams on this. (Note: Please obtain the requisite parental permissions for the excursion and be cautious in your selection of a cleanup location as students should not be exposed to potentially hazardous or toxic materials.)

Comprehensive Community Project

As a class, design a mural depicting the community engaged in green practices. During the planning phases of the project, students can vote on the green practices they find most important and submit sketches of their ideas. The mural might eventually be painted on a school wall or an area of the community most in need of beautification. You might also seek donations, from family or community members, of nontoxic, eco-friendly paints and materials to complete the project.

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Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this lesson is community. Children can be encouraged to wonder about steps they can take, both individually and in cooperation with others, to maintain the beauty of the environment:

- How can I show my appreciation for the world in which I live?
- How might I volunteer my time to help maintain the beauty of my surroundings?
- How can I make a positive contribution to the environment of my community and beyond?

Additional Online Resources

Tree Planting Resources:

- http://bit.ly/MSUTreePlanting
- http://bit.ly/PlantATreeRightWay
- http://bit.ly/videotreeplanting

PROJECT 2: GOING GREEN VIA HEALTHY LIVING

Background

Much of the food we consume is transported an average of 1,500 miles from its origin, essentially more than halfway across the United States. This process is costly, not just monetarily but to the environment as well. Transporting food over great distances exhausts energy resources and contributes to pollution emissions. To counteract these detrimental environmental effects, individuals and communities have increasingly adopted a locavore lifestyle. Locavores consume food grown locally. As a result, the food journey, and related environmental effects (including oil use and toxic emissions), is dramatically decreased. The more vehicles on the road, the more oil is consumed, leading to more pollution. Alternate forms of transportation, such as walking, biking, skating, or taking advantage of public transit, substantially reduce vehicle use and related toxic byproducts. Use of these alternate forms of transportation provides added benefits in the form of increased daily exercise. Every one of us can act individually and collectively to adopt a healthy lifestyle, thereby making the world a greener place.

Objectives

- Students will develop awareness of specific actions they can take to develop a healthy lifestyle and of the related benefits these actions provide for our Earth.
- Students will participate in green activities designed to promote and maintain a healthy way of life.
- Students are empowered to spread the word to friends and family members about how they might all become green stewards and protect the Earth's precious resources through engagement in healthy life habits.

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Focal Activity

Guiding Questions

- Where does the food you eat come from?
- Have you ever planted a garden?
- Have you ever eaten food from a garden? How does it taste?
- How do you get around your neighborhood?
- Have you ever taken a ride on a bus or a train?
- How do you think walking or riding a bike or taking a train might help our Earth?

Classroom Activity

Help students cultivate an edible class garden. If your school already has a garden, students can take pride in tending to a classroom plot. If your school does not yet have space for a garden, you might start with a modest planter box outside your classroom. Students can take the first steps of the gardening process by planting seeds in small pots within the classroom. Tomato and pumpkin seeds both make for quick and easy starts to the gardening experience. Once the plants have sprouted, students can transfer their plants into successively larger containers or directly into the garden. Depending on available space, individual students can start working on their own plant or work in gardening pairs and teams. Students can track the progress of their plants' growth over time and according to environmental conditions. Whenever possible, use rainwater to hydrate the garden. Depending on the scope and variety of vegetation in your garden, students can sample the fruits and vegetables and vote on their favorites. In addition to consuming the fruits of their labor, students can save the seeds for subsequent planting. You might take the gardening project a step further and invite families or other classrooms for an organic feast.

Extension Activity

Plan a field trip for your students to a local botanical garden, organic farm, or farmers' market. Some grocery stores also offer educational outreach programs for students. During their visit, students can sample local produce, learn more about the farm-to-store pipeline, and develop an understanding of how to make healthy food choices that benefit both their bodies and the environment.

Comprehensive Community Project

Lead your class in a campaign to promote the use of alternate forms of transportation among members of your school's student body. Hold a walk, bike, or carpool-to-school day once a month, and award eco-conscious prizes to the classes using the greenest forms of transportation. Talk to students about why alternate forms of transportation are important. (i.e. Riding a bike, rather than riding in a car, is not only beneficial for your heart and muscles, it also conserves the oil which is used to produce the gas that powers automobiles, which can ultimately be damaging to the environment.) Students in your class can take the lead on sharing this message, as well as planning

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and advertising the campaign with announcements to the student body, messages in home newsletters, and posters displayed around the school.

Character-Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this lesson is mindfulness. Children can be encouraged to think consciously about maintenance of an environmentally healthy lifestyle:

- What kind of foods can I consume that will benefit both my body and the Earth?
- What are some steps that my family and I can take to reduce the amount of oil we use in our modes of transportation?

Additional Online Resources

School Gardening & Healthy Eating:

- http://myhealthyschool.com
- http://www.kidsgardening.org

PROJECT 3: GOING GREEN VIA WASTE ELIMINATION

Background

Imagine how many trees would be preserved if we recycled every kind of paper. Recycling previously used materials is easy, requiring little more than placing recyclable materials into a designated container rather than the trash. Related waste elimination practices, including reducing the quantity of materials we consume, reusing materials multiple times, and refusing to buy green-unfriendly products in non-biodegradable disposable packaging, all contribute to the conservation of natural resources. This "reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse" process requires only simple modifications to existing practices, yet produces tremendous benefits for the Earth. Every one of us can act individually and collectively to minimize waste in our environment, thereby making the world a greener place.

Objectives

- Students will develop awareness of specific actions ("reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse") they can take to eliminate wastefulness in their daily lives and of the related benefits these actions provide for our Earth.
- Students will participate in green activities designed to minimize wastefulness and promote the use of a "reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse" model on a daily basis.
- Students are empowered to spread the word to friends and family members about how they might all become more green and protect the Earth's precious resources through engagement in a "reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse" lifestyle.

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Focal Activities

Guiding Questions

- What does it mean to reduce? To reuse? To recycle? To refuse?
- What are some things that you might be able to reduce your use of each day?
- What are some things that you might be able to reuse regularly?
- What are some things that you might recycle once you are finished using them?
- How do you think reducing, reusing, recycling, and refusing help our Earth?

Classroom Activity

Engage students in an "assemblage" art project using recycled materials. Several weeks prior to this activity, encourage students to start bringing in recyclable materials from home that can later be used for this project. Students can exercise their creative freedom to create two- or three-dimensional artwork. Encourage students to present their artwork to the class along with a description of the diverse materials they used to create their piece.

As an extension, you might offer a brief presentation of art forms in the environment that are made of recycled materials. You might even extend this presentation to demonstrate how materials as diverse as coffee cups or purses are now made of recycled materials as well.

Extension Activity

Help students design "reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse" charts to use at home. Students can brainstorm various activities that family members can participate in to help reduce waste (e.g., turn the lights off when leaving a room, turn the water off when brushing teeth, take shorter showers, recycle, etc.). This project can become a game for the whole family where members receive stars each time they take action to eliminate waste. Periodically, students can be invited to share their families' green progress with the class.

Comprehensive Community Project

Start a campaign to become a green school. The campaign could include various components such as: a recycling drive in which donations of diverse materials, from food storage containers to gently used clothing to electronics, are collected, sorted, and delivered to a relevant recycling facility; scratch-paper tubs in every classroom, to which families could donate old or partially used paper products to be reused for art projects, writing drafts, solving math problems, etc.; compost bins in the school cafeteria (perhaps one for each classroom, maintained on a daily basis by members of that classroom); or buckets around the school to collect rainwater for classroom gardens. (Note: Please check your state's environmental regulations regarding potential restrictions on rainwater collection.)

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Character-Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this lesson is responsibility. Children can be encouraged to think critically about how their actions have a direct impact on the environment:

- What options do I have when I want to throw something away?
- How does my choice of waste management impact the environment?
- How can I conserve resources in my environment?
- What are some things I can commit to doing every day that will benefit the environment?

Additional Online Resources

Recycling:

- https://bit.ly/NatGeoRecycleRoundup
- http://www.recycleguys.org/games.html
- http://www.epa.gov/recyclecity
- http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/recycling.html

Composting:

- http://bit.ly/compostkidsvideo
- http://bit.ly/kindergartencompostingvideo
- http://bit.ly/compostinghowto

Recycled Art for Kids:

- http://kinderart.com/recycle
- http://bit.ly/earthdaycrafts
- http://www.kid-at-art.com



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ADDITIONAL GREEN RESOURCES

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Resources for Kids: https://www.epa.gov/students/games-quizzes-and-videos-about-environment

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences: https://kids.niehs.nih.gov

Environmental Activities:

- http://bit.ly/earthchildgames
- http://pbskids.org/fetch/games/green

Planet Pals: http://www.planetpals.com/

Kids for Saving Earth: http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org

Green Guide for Kids: http://greenguideforkids.blogspot.com

Going Green Tips:

- http://bit.ly/enviroedufam
- https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/green-tips
- https://www.greenchildmagazine.com/teach-kids-to-save-energy-checklist



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