



## Lesson Plan 030105

### Earth Day Grocery Bag Art (Target: Grades 1-6)

#### Time Requirements:

- 1 (50-minute) period (Science/Earth Science Class or Art Class)
- Outside of Class: Trip to and from local grocery store to review bag decoration plan with manager. It is recommended that teachers acquire grocery bags in early March and deliver decorated bags back to the store near the end of March. This provides the store ample time to begin distributing them, and time for the teacher to interface with local media.

#### Objectives:

- Create awareness for Earth Day
- Create awareness for the importance of environmental responsibility
- Develop applied expressive/artistic skills
- Create “environment awareness” dialog between students and parents/guardians

#### Materials:

- “Earth Day Bag Art” pages, “10 Things We Can All Do to Help the Earth” page, “Letter to Grocery Store Manager” page, “Bag Art Press Release” page (<http://www.rustletheleaf.com/teaching.asp>)
- Non-Toxic Crayons or water-based markers
- Brown Paper Grocery Bags from local supermarket or grocer. A “Bundle” of bags (an industry term) would be 500. Ask for a bundle, and be sure to return all bags, whether they all get decorated or not.  
ALTERNATIVE: (where weather conditions permit) Use non-toxic colored chalk and create sidewalk art of these Earth Day messages for all students at the school to see as they enter/leave the school building(s).
- Digital Camera or still camera for taking pictures of finished designs and students as they are working on them. Great for local publicity, school newsletter, etc.

#### Methods:

- (2-3 minutes) Hand out and review “Earth Day Bag Art” pages. Distribute throughout the class so each student has access to at least 1 or 2 design ideas.
- (2-3 minutes) Hand out and review copies of “10 Things We Can All Do” sheet. Invite students to choose either to follow art from “Rustle the Leaf” designs or to create their own art and messages.
- (30-40 minutes) Ask students to color unmarked/unprinted areas of bags with designs for Earth Day. While students are coloring, take pictures.
- (5 minutes) Collect finished bags, have students put away markers/crayons.

- Send second bag and “10 Things We Can All Do” pages home with students. Assign students to create a different environmental message with family members and to color the second bag as homework.
- When students return with second bag for following class session, collect all bags. Combine all bags together and take back to grocery store for use/distribution during the week of Earth Day.

#### Lesson Information:

- On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated across the United States. In the 34 years that have followed, Earth Day has become a worldwide event that focuses on environmental responsibility in the use of/interaction with natural resources, in manufacturing processes, in materials and product distribution, in waste management and in consumer lifestyles.
- The founder of Earth Day, retired Senator Gaylord Nelson, has been instrumental in helping the event to grow and to become an important annual reminder of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- There are many ways in which Earth Day is celebrated at elementary schools every year. The practice of decorating grocery bags with environmental messages and returning them to be used at local stores has become very popular. It involves hand-on activities, the consideration of environmental messages and themes, and the sense of ‘where I live’ contribution to promoting environmental awareness.
- In this lesson, you are provided with several environmental messages from the cast of “Rustle the Leaf,” a comic strip and environment education web site (<http://www.rustletheleaf.com>). At Rustle the Leaf, our focus is Earth, Sky, Water, and our messages are directed at those elements. We have also provided a list of compelling environmental facts that serve as additional idea-starters for the creation of fun, effective grocery bag art. Of course, there is a wealth of additional information online and in local libraries. For more ideas and information, visit:

<http://www.earthday.net>

<http://www.epa.org>

<http://www.nwf.org>

<http://www.aeoe.org>

<http://www.eeweek.org>



## Lesson Plan 030105

### 10 Things We Can All Do to Help the Earth

1. The United States has a crisis in its growing cities and towns (urban areas). In the past 30 years alone, we have lost 30% of all our urban trees - a loss of over 600 million trees! We need to **"Leave the Trees in Our Cities Alone!"** We need to **"Plant More Trees in Our Cities!"**
2. Forests clean the air we breathe by taking carbon dioxide out of atmospheric circulation. They also provide oxygen, on which humans and other species depend. Although many people have heard about the importance of protecting forests, there has not been a significant reduction in deforestation. For example, 78 million acres of rainforest are still destroyed each year. That's an area larger than the square miles of the nation of Poland. We need to **"Protect Our Forests!"** We need to **"Plant a Tree Every Earth Day!"**
3. Clean, safe water for living is becoming scarce in some parts of the world. Although we often hear that the earth's surface is over 70% water, just 1% of that is fresh water! Human and industrial waste, urban runoff, agricultural fertilizers, sewage, heavy metals and pesticides poison our oceans and contaminate our rivers and groundwater. We need to **"Reduce Groundwater Contamination!"**
4. In the year 1800, worldwide population was 1 billion people. By the year 1900, the worldwide population was 1.7 billion. By the year 2000, worldwide population had more than tripled to 6.6 billion! If worldwide population growth continues at 2001 rates, the world will have a population of 22 billion by the year 2100! To sustain that kind of population density, major changes to human behavior will have to occur. We need to **"Invest in Recycling Programs!"** We need to **"Protect Natural Resources!"**
5. Using more recently-made household appliances—especially those with an Energy Star rating—help reduce the use of energy and help your parents save money! And it's more than just appliances: One recent study found that using a low-flow, energy-efficient showerhead saved 27 cents a day on water and 51 cents on electricity. At that rate, the showerhead paid for itself in just two months and then kept on saving money. We need to **"Use Energy-Saving Appliances at Home!"**
6. Recycling paper creates enormous savings and dramatically reduces the use of energy and the use of dangerous chemicals. Recycling paper uses 61% less energy than producing virgin (new) paper. Also, every ton of recycled paper saves about 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, three cubic yards of landfill space, 4000 kilowatts of energy, and 7000 gallons of water. This represents a 64% energy savings, a 58% water savings, and 60 pounds less of air pollution! Finally, we need to ask our local paper retailers for chlorine free papers. Even recycled paper often is reprocessed with chlorine compounds--toxic chemicals that create terrible pollution as the processing water is released by pulp and paper mills. We need to **"Recycle Paper!"** We need to **"Buy Only Recycled Paper Products!"** We need to **"Reduce Wasteful Paper Packaging!"** We need to **"Buy Chlorine Free Paper and Processed Chlorine Free Recycled Paper!"**
7. A single quart of motor oil, if disposed of improperly, can contaminate up to 2,000,000 gallons of fresh water. We need to **"Safely Dispose of Motor Oil!"**
8. Every year, each American throws out about 1200 pounds of garbage that can be composted instead of rotting in landfills and mixing with toxins. Also, our landfills are being overrun with yard clippings that can become organic mulch for use in gardens and yards. We need to **"Start Composting Discarded Food"** and **"Start Mulching Yard Clippings!"**
9. The majority of our household and industrial cleaning products—detergents, soaps, cleansers—use chlorine-based or petroleum-based chemicals as their active ingredients. These chemicals are devastating to the environment, causing the buildup of toxins in groundwater and the spread of toxins into all forms of life. We need to **"Use Natural, Biodegradable Cleaners!"** We need to **"Stop Using Chlorine Cleaners!"** We need to **"Stop Using Petroleum-Based Cleaners!"**
10. In just 20 years, worldwide cell phone users have grown from 380,000 to over 120 million. Because cellular phone technologies advance at an incredible rate, many cell users upgrade their phones every 12-24 months, discarding old phones. This is creating a growing environmental crisis. Inside the sleek, plastic exterior of every discarded phone sits a package of electronics laden with hazardous substances called persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals (PBTs). The PBTs used in cell phones include arsenic, antimony, beryllium, cadmium, copper, lead, nickel and zinc. These materials make up the wiring and computer chips that allow cell phones to receive and transmit calls. In the trash, PBTs escape their plastic housings and are transferred through air, land and water into the fatty tissues of animals and humans, increasing in concentration as they climb up the food chain. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, PBTs are associated with a range of adverse health effects, including damage to the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer and genetic impacts. They pose a special risk to children, whose bodies are still developing. We need to **"Safely Dispose of Cell Phone Batteries!"** We need to **"Return Old Cell Phones to Manufacturers!"**

#### Sources:

The National Wildlife Federation  
The US Environmental Protection Agency  
The Earth Day Network  
Trees Across America  
Environmental Defense Network  
The Chlorine Free Products Association



## Lesson Plan 030105

### Grocery Store Manager Contact Letter Template

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Date

Store Manager's Name, Title

Store Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear (Store Manager's Name):

Every year, the students at (your school name) learn about and celebrate Earth Day. You might be interested to know that 2005 is the 35th Anniversary of Earth Day, which is a major milestone for everyone who is concerned about protecting and preserving our wonderful planet.

I'm writing to you to ask for your participation in our own Earth Day celebration this year. Don't worry: I'm not asking for money! I'm asking to "borrow" a bundle of paper grocery bags, which our students will decorate with important environmental messages and drawings. We'd like to decorate these bags over the next few weeks, and then return them to you so that you can add them to your checkout stands and distribute them during the week of Earth Day, April 16-22, 2005. Earth Day itself is April 22, 2005.

**Here are two important things for you to know:**

1. Our messages and decorations will be in no way offensive or insulting to your customers. We will be in care and control of the bags at our school, and will make sure every one of them is appropriate to your clientele.
2. I've included some sample messages along with this letter.

Our goal would be to pick up the bundle of bags by (insert date), and to bring them back on (insert date). Also, we would love the opportunity to have a few pictures taken at your store on the day the bags go into distribution. We would have some of our students there with their decorated bags. These pictures would be used in our school communications, and would be offered to local newspapers and other media as a way to let the public know about the importance of Earth Day, and about your participation.

If you have any questions, please call me at (phone number) or email me at (email address). I am anxious to get the details worked out so we can all make this the most memorable Earth Day ever! Thanks for your time and consideration on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

School

Address

City, State, Zip



## Lesson Plan 030105

### Earth Day Bag Art Press Release Template

Contact: (Name of School Contact Person)  
(Phone Number of School Contact Person)  
(Email Address of School Contact Person)

**Date: (insert date)**

**For Immediate Release**

## (School Name) Students and (Grocery Store Name) Make Sure Earth Day Awareness is “In the Bag”

*(Date, Insert Your City, State)*--April 22, 2005 is the 35th celebration of Earth Day, and students from (School Name) have partnered with a local grocer to make sure nobody forgets. This month, students in grades (grades) are decorating hundreds of paper grocery bags from (store name) with messages about how to help protect and preserve the environment. Once decorated, the bags will be distributed through the store’s checkout stands during the week of Earth Day, April 16 through 22, 2005.

The Earth Day project is part of (school name)’s goal to help students share their knowledge about problems caused by pollution. Messages and artwork on the bags reference concerns over air quality, water purity, land use and conservation. Some of the artwork for bag decorations has been provided courtesy of the acclaimed, nationally-distributed environmental comic strip series “Rustle the Leaf” (<http://www.rustletheleaf.com>). Comic strip artist Dan Wright has created an environmental message to accompany images of each of the comic’s cast members: Rustle the Leaf, Rooty (an Acorn Sprout), Paige (a drop of water) and Dandy (a Dandelion Seed).

Earth Day was founded in 1970 by former Governor and Senator of Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson. The first Earth Day in 1970 rallied over 20 million Americans from around the country and on college campuses to get involved in environmental "teach-ins". This event, which was the largest grassroots mobilization in US history, created what has come to be known as the environmental movement. It was out of this event that came the first environmental legislation - the Clean Air and Clean Water acts. In 1990, more than 200 million people in 141 countries participated during Earth Day's 20th anniversary. Due in large part to the efforts of hundreds of local organizers, "Earth Day" is now an anticipated annual event. Earth Day observations and celebrations now include all social sectors, nationalities and cultural groups. Earth Day has become perhaps the most prominent catalyst for ongoing environmental education, action and change. (Source: [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net))

Spearheading the effort locally are (insert teacher names), who teach (subjects, grades) at the school. According to (participating school teacher name), the grocery bag decoration effort is a great way for young people to begin identifying with important environmental issues. “We believe that every one of us, no matter how old or how young, can have an impact on the future of our air, water and land,” said (participating school teacher’s last name). (participating school teacher’s last name) expressed hopes that, as similar activities are carried out around the world, more people will recognize the need to take action to solve pressing environmental problems.

For more information, contact: (insert name of school contact with title, school name, school address, city, state, zip, phone number and email.) For information about Earth Day, visit <http://www.earthday.net>. For information about Rustle the Leaf weekly environmental comics, visit <http://www.rustletheleaf.com>.

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**WWW.RUSTLETHELEAF.COM**



