



ACTIVITY

HISTORY'S LESSONS ON GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Time: 360 minutes

Days of Implementation: 6 days, one hour each day

Grade Level: Upper Secondary

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Alignment with STEAM subjects

Science: Examining how scientific breakthroughs have supported positive environmental efforts.

Technology: Exploring how technology has shaped history.

Arts: Incorporating visual storytelling and design to convey historical narratives and sustainable development progress.

Mathematics: Utilizing data analysis and statistical techniques to analyze historical patterns and demonstrating their relevance to today's sustainability metrics.

Related or achieved SDGs

This activity relates to the three dimensions of Sustainable Development: social, economic, and environmental, and demonstrates how these three are interconnected.

Objectives

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

- Comprehend significant historical events and movements that influence today's sustainability challenges.
- Examine the social, economic, and environmental repercussions of colonization, the Industrial Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement, and key international environmental accords.
- Make connections between historical insights and the SDGs.
- Work collaboratively on research projects and present results through multimedia formats.
- Consider how historical understanding fosters sustainable practices and global citizenship.

Materials Needed

- Internet access and research materials (books, articles, documentaries)
- Digital devices (computers/tablets) for creating multimedia presentations
- Projector and screen for class presentations
- Chart paper, markers, and art supplies for visual aids

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Historical events have greatly impacted the present, and movements or multilateral agreements have shaped society and the planet. In this activity, students will explore how movements or time periods in history have shaped current challenges. The purpose is to understand how learning from the past will help us collectively shape better futures and achieve sustainable development.

1. Inquiry & Exploration

Text Discussion:

Have the students read the following texts and discuss them using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). It is also recommended to select a locally relevant text based on the students' country, region, or other issues that most closely affect their school community.

1. *Whatever the location, epoch, or context in which they take place, the horizon of such struggles remains the same: how to belong fully in this world that is common to all of us, how to pass from the status of the excluded to the status of the right-holder, how to participate in the construction and the distribution of the world.* [Achille Mbembe, Critique of Black Reason](#)
2. *The colonizing mindset views land as property, a commodity for speculation, capital, or natural resources. In contrast, for our people, land represents everything: our identity, a bond with our ancestors, the home of our non-human relatives, a source of medicines, a repository of knowledge, and the foundation of our existence. It embodied our duty to the world. Sacred and unique, it was a gift given to us, not a tradable item. It cannot be bought or sold. During the deportations, people carried these meanings with them. Whether in their native territories or new locations, the shared land provided them strength and a cause for which to advocate.* Adapted text from [Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass](#)

Discussion Questions:

- What is going on in this text?
- What makes you say that?
- What else can you find?

2. Investigation & Research

After discussing an initial text, students dive into more historical events.

- Divide students into groups and have each group select a historical event or time period, such as colonization, the Industrial Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement, or a significant environmental treaty.
- Guide students to investigate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of their selection. One helpful example where they can find information or videos is through the [Ages of Globalization](#) website and [video library](#).
- Encourage the use of primary sources, digital databases, and multimedia tools to enhance learning and understanding.

Discussion Questions:

Engage students in a discussion on the following questions, promoting reflection on their research:

- Describe your chosen event or time period. What were the important defining factors?
- Where did this take place? Was it local, national, regional, or global?
- How did this affect individuals in the past?
- How is this still affecting the world today?
- What lessons can we learn from analyzing this event or time period?

3. Implementation & Design

After the research phase, have students synthesize their findings in creative presentations, such as comics, videos, infographics or powerpoints. The purpose of their presentations should be to demonstrate how lessons from the past can connect to the advancement or hindrance of the SDGs. Some ideas include:

- Colonization
 - The disruption of indigenous cultures, erosion of traditional knowledge, and emergence of new languages, religions, and social hierarchies are reshaping societies.
 - Resource exploitation and wealth extraction; trade networks benefiting colonial powers over local economies.
 - Deforestation and the introduction of non-native species disrupts ecosystems, causing significant harm to the environment.
- Industrial Revolution
 - Urbanization led to the emergence of new classes, challenging working conditions, and shifts in family structures as people migrated to cities.
 - Growth in industrial production and capitalism, wealth and social inequality, and transformation from agrarian to industrial economies.
 - Air and water pollution from fossil fuels, and resource depletion from rapid mass production.
- The Civil Rights Movement
 - Advancements in racial equality and social justice have led to increased participation from marginalized communities.
 - Efforts to close economic gaps, enhance education and job access for disadvantaged groups, and changes in corporate labor practices.
 - Inspired focus on ecological justice, highlighting impacts on minority communities.
- Key International Environmental Accords
 - Enhanced global cooperation and responsibility towards the environment; increased public awareness of climate action.
 - Investment in renewable energy and creation of green jobs; industries adapting to environmental standards.
 - Reduced harmful emissions and ozone layer protection through agreements; established frameworks to limit greenhouse gases and address climate impacts.

- Students should incorporate visual aids that display data trends and illustrate cause-and-effect relationships between historical events and SDGs today, such as line graphs, bar charts, diagrams, infographics, or concept maps.

4. Testing & Reflection

Before giving final presentations, split the students into groups. They should carry out a short practice presentation and engage in a peer review process in order to strengthen their final projects.

Discussion Questions (For the peer-review process):

- What was your favorite part of the presentation?
- What did they do well?
- Were there enough visual aids?
- Was there a clear connection to specific SDGs?
- Was there a clear explanation about the past event and how it connected to today's events?
- What other improvements could be made?

5. Presentation & Action

Facilitate a school-wide exhibition where students can present their work to peers, teachers, and parents.

Reflection Questions:

- After the entire activity, students can reflect on:
 - how historical events have shaped current societal approaches to sustainability;
 - how their research can guide future efforts to take sustainable actions;
 - how history can help us address modern challenges.

Criteria

- Depth and accuracy in exploring historical events and their impacts.
- Effective use of primary and secondary sources.
- Clarity, visual appeal, and overall creativity of the multimedia presentation.
- Ability to connect historical insights with modern sustainability concepts.
- Effective teamwork and engagement in group discussions.
- Clarity in presenting ideas and responding to questions.

Reflection:

- Did students fully understand?
- What should be improved for next time?
- Was the lesson interesting enough for the students?