

SOCIAL STUDIES

Communication Arts: English; Speech/Debate



LESSON 4 • Wilderness Issues: Community Attitude Survey

Objectives:

Students will:

- assess the values held by various groups and individuals regarding Wilderness.
- distinguish between beliefs, values and attitudes.

Background:

This activity should be used as a follow-up to “Fact vs. Opinion” in this strand. If this lesson has been completed, students will have skills to conduct community interviews. The teacher should go over “Guidelines For Interviewing People” with students so interview questions are appropriate and those people consenting to interviews are treated with utmost respect and consideration. In this lesson students will develop a questionnaire and conduct a community survey.

Materials:

- writing materials to make questionnaires
- student handout: “Guidelines For Interviewing People”, page 123.

Duration:

one week of class time, 45 minutes to one hour per day, plus time out of class to interview people in the community

Location: classroom and in the community

Activity: Wilderness Issues: Community Attitude Survey

Procedure:

1. Complete one or more of the previous lessons in this unit. Working in small groups, ask students to prepare a questionnaire that can be used to measure people’s views about Wilderness. Questions should be constructed so that they can be analyzed according to people’s beliefs, values and attitudes. Questions that can be answered with a brief “yes” or “no” will contribute to the students’ success in getting people to take the time to cooperate in the survey. “Yes” or “No” questions are also easier quantified when the students are putting together the results. For example:

“Have you ever visited a Wilderness?”

47 Yes; 51 No; 67 undecided.

“Do you use Wilderness at present for recreational purposes?”

“If yes, do you: fish, hunt? hike? other?”



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Procedure continued:

2. Students should sort and compile the questionnaire items generated by each group and come up with a final version of the questionnaire. The teacher should review the final draft before it is printed and used.
3. Each student takes the questionnaire and, after school and on weekends, interviews five individuals in the community. Students may work in pairs to conduct the interviews. Students record people's responses on the copy of the questionnaire they are carrying.
4. When interviews are completed, students may tally, analyze and discuss the results. Caution students that it is very hard to conduct what may be considered a scientifically valid community attitude survey. Such surveys require careful question construction, with the questions tested on a pilot basis and statistically analyzed in special ways to ensure they are measuring what they are supposed to measure. Who responds to the questionnaire is critically important before any generalizations can be made. For example, if the students find the first five people they see, or interview their parents and their next-door neighbors, they are likely getting what may be called a "biased sample" or too narrow of a sample base or profile.
5. Students may consider also asking open-ended questions to gather insight into aspects of their community's underlying belief systems. Those questions may prompt them to qualify their data interpretation.

Evaluation / Follow-up / Extension

- Choose an endangered plant or animal and describe one belief, one attitude, and one value that might be held related to it.
- Hold a class discussion on the question: Why is it important that people understand that their own attitudes about Wilderness come from their values and beliefs?
- Conclude this series of lessons with these discussion questions:
 1. Imagine a world without Wilderness:
 - What does it look like?
 - What happens to the animals?
 - How does it make you feel?
 2. Do you feel Wilderness is valuable even if you never get to use or visit it?
 3. With world population growing, do you feel we need to use the remaining Wilderness areas to provide material goods for the people or preserve the remaining wild lands to balance the impact of population pressures?
 4. Look at the definition of Wilderness in the Wilderness Act of 1964. What other areas besides forests could be considered for Wilderness?
 5. What arguments do the forest industry representatives use when opposing additional Wilderness designation? Can you see facts they have ignored? Can you see the use of emotion?

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Evaluation/ Follow-up/ Extension continued:

6. What arguments do the Wilderness advocates use when arguing for additional Wilderness designation? Do they ignore facts? Can you see the use of emotion?
7. Do you feel this is an emotional issue? Discuss some examples of how emotions are used to sway opinions.
8. Should the number of visitors to Wilderness areas be limited?
9. What uses or activities should be allowed in Wilderness areas? Why?
10. What impact will additional Wilderness have on the local economy? Why?
11. What do you feel is the most important reason for Wilderness?
12. Discuss the following beliefs many people hold regarding Wilderness areas:
 - Only a small minority of people use Wilderness areas.
 - Wilderness areas are only for elitist backpackers.
 - People with disabilities and all but the super-healthy can't visit Wilderness.
 - Wilderness represents a single use of the National Forests that "locks out" other uses.
 - Wilderness designation permits the spread of insects and disease and prevents effective control of wildfires.

Credit: *CLEARING Magazine, Wilderness Issue, Summer 1984*

Career Options:

Wilderness manager, natural resource professional, journalist, logger, miner, rancher, farmer, environmental activist

References:

Activity adapted from Project WILD, "Wildlife Issues: Community Attitude Survey"
CLEARING Magazine, Wilderness Issue, Summer 1984



Lesson: Wilderness Issues: Community Attitude Survey
STUDENT HANDOUT
Guidelines for Interviewing People

To some extent, everyone in a community is an expert on something. Perhaps your students will want to know what something in the community looked like 20 or 40 years ago. They may want to speak with some long-living residents. An interview can provide a powerful piece of oral history—or it can be an intrusion into the life and privacy of a person. If students are sent out to interview people, some guidelines are useful.

Students should have an introductory letter on school stationary explaining what they are doing, who they are, and asking for cooperation and assistance—with thanks in advance.

Interviews should be planned in advance, at least in terms of outlining major questions to be asked. Students should be taught to conduct a professional interview and to keep the interview focused on the purposes of the research. For example, students should listen and record their subject's responses. Rather than the students using the time of the interview to expound their own views on the topic, their task is to learn the subject's views. The subject should at all times be treated with dignity and respect. If any form of recording is desired, the people being interviewed should be asked in advance for their permission and should be told what will be done with the information. If you want to quote the person being interviewed by name, then the person should be given the opportunity to see the written proceedings of the interview, review any excerpts to be used, or review the recording before any class or public use of the information takes place. If any public opinion surveys or other forms of interviews in public places are planned, students should be supervised by adult helpers. People who might be concerned (shop keepers, mall managers, etc.) should be asked in advance and informed about the project and its purposes. If people do not want to be interviewed, thank them politely for their time and let them proceed with their business. As a general principle, it is recommended that any interviews to be conducted by students be arranged in advance by their teacher. An in-class trial run or practice session using role-playing techniques with students serving as constructive critics of their performances can be effective preparation for actually conducting interviews.

Credit: Aquatic Project WILD, "Living Research: Aquatic Heroes and Heroines"