

Too Much Stuff! The Media, The Environment, and Me

Write a summary of your lesson*

Through watching a video, joining in virtual/online discussions as well as classroom discussions, children will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the amount of 'stuff' we not only have, but throw away each and every day.

Students will then read and discuss an article that talks about how the media and social networks target teens and young adults. A discussion about values as well as the impact this massive amount of material goods has on our environment will be held and a comic strip (digital or low-tech) will be created that illustrates a scenario.

What are your instructional objectives? (measureable)*

- Students will have a better understanding of the amount of material goods we use and throw away, and to come up with alternatives.
- Students will be able to identify how and why various marketers target children/young adults to buy things they don't 'need.'
- Ultimately, students will become more critical viewers of advertising so that they will:
 - become more critical of marketing techniques aimed at their population
 - recognize the impact of 'materials' on the environment (both locally and globally)

What student needs, interests, and prior learning are a foundation for this lesson?

What conceptual difficulties might students have? What curriculum connections will you make in this lesson with other topics you teach?

Students should have a basic understanding of the impact that materials, waste, and recycling have on our environment. Prior knowledge of the basic science concepts behind environmental and 'green' issues should be assessed.

Students should have a discussion about what is important in their lives: things/materials vs. more intrinsically important things like spending time with family, volunteering in the community, cultural experiences, etc. Depending on the community and student population, some students may have difficulty with this concept.

Curriculum Standards

These standards are drawn from "[Content Knowledge](#)," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Behavioral Studies, Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

Family / Consumer Sciences, Standard 4: Understand how knowledge and skills related to consumer and resources management affect the well-being of individuals, families, and society.

Geography, Standard 14: Understands how human actions modify the physical environment.

Geography, Standard 15: Understands how physical systems affect human systems.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Language Arts, Standard 10: Understands the characteristics and components of the media.

What are the guiding questions for the pupils?*

Why are young adults targeted in the media?

In what ways are they targeted?

Why does it matter?

What is the impact of buying behavior on our environment?

Students examine their consumption habits and consider strategies for acquiring necessities in ways that do less harm to the environment.

What will require higher order thinking in this activity?*

Students will be predicting, summarizing, make conclusions, and creating new understandings throughout these 2-plus days of lessons.

How will the lesson support the development of 21st century skills?*

Students can (if available) use blogging as a means to collaborate and communicate with their classmates and teacher(s). Backchanneling is another web 2.0 tool that can be used to illicit input from students, making them active vs passive viewers of the movie presented on the first day. Creating a class 'word cloud' is a powerful tool to help students quickly and easily see a visual depiction of their data. Digital comics are yet another web tool that involves collaborating, creating and communicating digitally. GlogsterEDU is web tool students can use to create 'virtual posters' to promote their cause.

Describe the procedures you will use to implement the lesson. Be specific enough so that another teacher could take your plan and implement it the way you envisioned.*

Day 1:

1. WARM-UP: Ask students to make a list of everything they can remember throwing away during the past 24 hours. After giving them time to write, invite students to come to the (interactive) whiteboard and write down one thing they threw away. You could also have students send you their items on a list which you would then create a classroom "trash" word cloud (wordle.net). The more often an item appears, the larger it becomes in the word cloud which will give kids a powerful visual of the results.

2. Once they have made this class list, and/or class word cloud, look at it together. Ask:

How much of this stuff is necessary? (You may get into a discussion over what is considered "necessary" and why.)
Which of the things on this list might/could you dispose of differently?

As a class, brainstorm some alternatives to throwing away the "trash" they've listed. Examples might include bringing coffee from home in a reusable container or recycling a Starbucks cup, using a lunch bag vs paper and plastic baggies, for example. Ask:

Why is it important to think about what we use, what we throw away, and to come up with alternatives?

A fun way to wrap up this session would be to show this digital story found on www.storyjumper.com: [Trash Mountain](http://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/2174/Trash-Mountain)
(<http://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/2174/Trash-Mountain>)

3. ACTIVITY: View the movie "Story of Stuff" (YouTube: "Story of Stuff" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLBE5QAYXp8>))

Open up a backchannel (todaysmeet.com) and have students post questions/comments while viewing. Pose the following questions for them to think about and respond to while viewing:

- What questions do you have about the video? Is there anything you wonder about the narrator or the things she's saying?
- What do we know about Annie Leonard from the video?
- Do you think she's biased (that is, does she seem to have a particular opinion about these issues)?
- What effect did the pictures in the video have on you as a viewer?
- How does this video make you feel?
- What did you learn? Did the film change your mind about anything, or make you reflect on anything in your own life?

Day 2: Media Markets to Teens/Young Adults

Students will:

- 1) Participate in a discussion where they will identify how advertisement affects their consumption of material goods.

Read the article: [Advertising to Teens, Why and How Marketers Target Kids](http://suite101.com/article/advertising-to-teens-a14289) (<http://suite101.com/article/advertising-to-teens-a14289>)

Discuss each of the questions addressed in the article to insure comprehension.

- Why do marketers love teens?
- How do they reach kids?
- How do marketers do it?
- Why is advertising so effective?
- What's wrong with this picture?
- How can you help?

This can be accomplished by facilitating a conversation a) with the classroom as a whole, b) with students broken into smaller groups who are then brought back to the larger class for assimilation, or 3) via a classroom blog, with prompt(s) by the teacher who will facilitate an online discussion.

Assignment/Assessment

Students will create a comic strip showing the effects of advertisement on pollution. Students can create paper/pencil/color hardcopy comics or a digital comic using any one of a variety of web 2.0 comic creation programs (bitstripsforschools.com, pixton.com, for example)

FOR EXTRA CREDIT or ONGOING ACTIVITY: For homework, students keep a double-entry journal for 24 hours recording their “stuff” usage. In the left-hand column, they should record answers to the following questions: How much “stuff” do they use? What kind? What do they throw away? Where does it come from? How does it make them feel?

In the right hand column, they should write down reflections on what they record on the left side: Did they need as much of this item as they used? Did they need it at all? Is there an alternative to buying this? Is there an alternative to throwing it away?

Let students know that their “stuff” diaries will not be shared with classmates and can be anonymous. The purpose of the exercise is to examine the applicability of Annie Leonard’s message in their own lives, to evaluate how and to what extent it resonates, and to encourage mindfulness about what they consume going forward.

(lesson adapted directly from <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/studying-stuff/#more-5315>)

Other lessons/extensions/resources:

<http://suite101.com/article/advertising-to-teens-a14289>

<http://mediasmarts.ca/marketing-consumerism>

<http://www.nwf.org/Global-Warming/School-Solutions/Eco-Schools-USA/Become-an-Eco-School/Pathways/Consumption-and-Waste.aspx>

Extension Resources:

<http://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/buy-nothing-day>

http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/buy_nothing_day_Nov08.pdf

<http://noimpactproject.org/experiment/>

What type of pupil collaboration is in this lesson?*

In addition to the class blog, the backchannel, classroom discussion, students can be grouped as seen fit by the teacher in support of differentiation or collaborative models in the classroom.

How will you assess this lesson? What are the formative and summative assessments that will be used with the pupils? What are the prerequisite technology skills pupils need to participate in this activity?*

Day 1: Collecting both data on the items that students shared that they threw away, as well as the contribution to the blog and backchannel. You could do a simple checklist that shows who has contributed. Students who post probing questions, or who further the blog discussion and stay on topic can be given a higher degree of credit.

The final assessment is the digital comic. Students will demonstrate through imagery, character, setting and story, the impact media has on young population and the resulting overabundance of material goods on our environment. Students will create a comic strip showing how advertisement leads to consumption and how consumption can lead to waste, which ultimately affects our environment.

Rubrics for both the online blog conversation and the digital comic assessment are attached on this course.

Students need basic computer skills, appropriate online discussion behavior, and a brief introduction to the digital comic application.

What resources are needed?*

Access to a computer that projects the word cloud gathered on day one as well as the YouTube video onto a screen or interactive whiteboard is required, along with adequate speakers. Students will need laptops, or other one-to-one devices in order to participate in the backchannel while watching the video. Access to online technology in order to participate in the classroom blog and the digital comic tool is necessary.