

ecoMentors Lesson Plan Template: Helping kids explore the planet!

Title: Early Civilizations

Grade Level(s): 5

Time/Date:

School:

Teacher:

Directions to school, class:

Ontario Curriculum Connection: Canada and World Connections – Early Civilizations

Vocabulary: Words & Concepts your class may be learning, look these up yourself too!

Natural Resource - A material source of wealth, such as timber, fresh water, or a mineral deposit, that occurs in a natural state and has economic value

Materials and Equipment: List these before and while you plan and revise so you're prepared.

Bring some pictures of Easter Island and the big statues.

Use the work sheet Easter Island

What is your class accomplishing?: Learning & Activity Goals, Objectives

- **Identify ways in which the natural environment shaped the cultures of various early civilizations**
- **Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between early civilizations and the environment**
- **Demonstrate an understanding of some of the values and beliefs on which life was based and how they affected daily lives**
- **Examine how environment, society, and technology were related in early civilizations and today.**

Procedure

The Spark: Introductions, Demonstrations, Show and Tell, Topic Intro (Break the ice!) ~5-10min

Introduce yourself and the ecoMentors program. *Today we will discuss the environment in connection to what you're learning about Early Civilizations.*

Ask Students to introduce themselves along with any interesting facts they've learned about early civilizations.

Brainstorming, Getting ideas, Connecting ideas (assess their knowledge!) ~10-20min

What is a natural resource? What are some natural resources that early American civilizations used? (Buffalo, Cod, Forests etc..) How did they use the whole buffalo? Is that any different from the way we use resources nowadays? Did early civilizations have any values or beliefs connected to how they used natural resources? What are some inventions or tools that allowed early civilizations to move ahead? How are these inventions or tools connected to natural resources?

Activity, Game, Exercise, Debate, Puzzles, Problem Solving, Role Play ~10-30mins

Discussion: *How does the environment shape and change the culture of people? How are families in early civilizations different from those in modern civilizations? What are some cultural characteristics of people in Canada compared to where they live and their environments?*

What are some cultural characteristics of the people from:

1. The ocean, beaches and isolation of Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada?
2. The prairies and cattle – based culture of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba?
3. The pacific coast, mountains and massive redwoods of British Columbia?
4. The large and multicultural urban centers and of Southern Ontario?
5. The cold, isolated and snowy north of the Yukon and Nunavut?

How have your surroundings made you into the person you are today? What are some other examples around the world of how the environment has shaped culture? What are some of the environmental reasons that civilizations have failed?¹ What are some of the environmental problems that could cause our civilization to fail?

What are some old world lifestyle choices that we could adopt that would help the environment?

Activity, Game, Exercise, Debate, Puzzles, Problem Solving, Role Play(Pt. II or Cont...) ~10-30mins

Study of Easter Island; a warning for civilization today?

Point out the location of Easter Island (Rapa Nui) on a map, or bring a picture with you. Also show some pictures of the Moai Statues (some of them are 30 feet tall!) Tell the story (make it exiting!) of how a Dutch sailor arrived on an unknown island on Easter Sunday in 1722. On this small island (171 square kilometers) he found hundreds of huge statues. An indication that once, here lived a big civilization. However, he found a society in a primitive state with about 3,000 people living in squalid reed huts or caves, engaged in primitive warfare and cannibalism in a desperate attempt to supplement the meager food supplies (rats and chickens) available on the island.²

Provide the class with a short story of how it is believed that when the first people arrived on Easter Island, it was then a lush paradise, and how their culture and population grew. Then, divide the class in 4 groups and provide each group with different clues to answer the following question: *Why was the civilization gone when the island was discovered in 1722?* Provide each group with a clue card (see work sheet) and ask them to play detective and archeologists and figure out how this culture collapsed. The goal is to have each group come up with a different explanation! Use the clues and questions on the work sheet Easter Island to steer the groups in the right direction. For your own background info: check the wikipedia site!

Each group should present their results to the class. Then, discuss with the class: *What do you think that could have happened on Easter Island? What did the Easter Island inhabitants had as Natural Resources? Trees! How did they use them? Which group has the right answer to the question "Why did civilization collapse?"* **All groups are partly right: Group 1 says the cause is the rats, who ate the palm seeds, so no new trees could grow. Group 2 says the islanders cut down the trees to transport their statues. Group 3 says the trees disappeared because of a climate change, causing erosion. Group 4 says the civilization was never highly developed because the food plants the people brought with them could not grow very well in the Easter Island climate and the actual destruction of the population occurred later, due to slavery and disease.**

We will never know what the main reason was, but probably all these things have contributed to the poor conditions the people were living in.

Why do you think it is important for us to understand what happened on Easter Island? Do you think this could also happen with our plane Earth? Why? Why not?

What can we do to make sure our Earth does not run out of resources?

What are some major environmental problems our Earth and our civilization faces nowadays?

Contingency, Plan B, extra game or activity (Back up plan) ~5-10mins

Debate - Old World vs. New World: Linking Environment, Society and Technology

Tell students that you will have a debate between two groups. Divide the class in half physically or tell them the topics and let them choose their sides: old world = better or new world = better (this can be tricky as the sides might be uneven in numbers and you might have to move a few debate members).

Debate Rules

1. Flip a coin or for even more excitement get one person from each team to play a round of rock, paper, scissors to see which team starts the debate.
2. Tell students that they will get one point for their team if they can give a valid point on why the old world or new world was better. They must also identify which aspect of the old world or new world they are describing; environment, society or technology.
3. When one group makes a point, the other side must counter-debate the same point. If they can debate the same point, they can begin the next round, if they can't counter debate, the other team gets to begin the next round of debate.
4. Each valid point is one point scored for the team.
5. Allow the teacher or a panel of 2-3 students to decide whether or not the points are valid debate points.

Finish the debate at the first team to reach 15 or 20 points.

Presentation of Findings ~5-15mins

Have each student state one old-world style of living they could adopt that would help the environment. Also let the students come up with things that we know now, that ancient civilizations perhaps did not know, that can help us protect our Natural Resources.

Review, Conclusion and steps towards continued action ~5-10mins

How can you and your family adopt more old world style approaches to living in your daily lives? And how would you feel about these changes? Why is it important to take this serious?

References

1. <http://www.learner.org/exhibits/collapse/> & <http://www.learner.org/exhibits/collapse/chacocanyon.html>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Island

Great work ecoMentor! After use of Lesson Plan revise, add ideas and repeat!