



A Day for the Environment

Lesson Plan

Produced by Earth Day Network in association with
American Experience



EXCLUSIVE CORPORATE FUNDING FOR AMERICAN EXPERIENCE PROVIDED BY LIBERTY MUTUAL.
MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION, THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC TELEVISION VIEWERS.
AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS PRODUCED FOR PBS BY WGBH BOSTON.



A Day for the Environment

Produced by Earth Day Network in association with American Experience

INTRODUCTION

Through various forms of media, students will explore the history and accomplishments of Earth Day by engaging in a series of questions: Why was the first Earth Day needed? What happened on the first Earth Day? What happened as a result of Earth Day? Is Earth Day still needed today, and if so, what should be its goals?

LESSON OVERVIEW

Grade Level & Subject: Grades 7-10: Civics and History

Length: 2-3 class periods

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the social context and events that led to the organization of the first Earth Day.
- Describe the first Earth Day in 1970 – its goals, activities and participants.
- Learn what governmental steps were taken after Earth Day to address the environmental concerns of citizens.
- Debate whether Earth Day is still needed today, and if so, why.

National Standards Addressed:¹

This lesson addresses the following [The Standards & Position Statement](#) from the [National Council for the Social Studies](#):

- **Content Standard: NSS-C.5-8.1 and NSS-C.9-12.1 CIVIC LIFE, POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**
 - **What are Civic Life, Politics, and Government?**
 - What is civic life? What is politics? What is government? Why are government and politics necessary? What purposes should government serve?
 - What are the nature and purposes of constitutions?
- **Content Standard: NSS-C.5-8.2 and NSS-C.9-12.2 FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM**
 - **What are the Foundations of the American Political System?**
 - What is the American idea of constitutional government?
 - What are the distinctive characteristics of American society?
 - What is American political culture?
 - What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy?

¹ <http://www.educationworld.com/standards/>.

- **Content Standard: NSS-C.5-8.3 and NSS-C.9-12.3 PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY**
 - **How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?**
 - What does the national government do?
 - How are state and local governments organized and what do they do?
 - Who represents you in local, state, and national governments?
 - What is the place of law in the American constitutional system?
 - How does the American political system provide for choice and opportunities for participation?
- **Content Standard: NSS-C.5-8.5 and NSS-C.9-12.5 ROLES OF THE CITIZEN**
 - **What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?**
 - What are the rights of citizens?
 - What are the responsibilities of citizens?
 - What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?
 - How can citizens take part in civic life?

This lesson addresses the following [National Standards for History](#) presented by [The National Center for History in the Schools](#):

- **Content Standard: NSS-USH.9-12.10 ERA 10 CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES (1968 TO THE PRESENT)**
 - Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States

Materials Needed:

- Earth Day object or historical artifact (optional)
- Reproducible #1 – The Setting before Earth Day Worksheet and Questions
- Reproducible #2 – The Setting before Earth Day Answer Key
- Reproducible #3 – Gaylord Nelson’s Vision Worksheet and Questions
- Reproducible #4 – Gaylord Nelson’s Vision Answer Key
- Reproducible #5 – When the People Spoke Worksheet and Questions
- Reproducible #6 – When the People Spoke Answer Key
- Reproducible #7 – America the Sustainable
- [Earth Days](#). Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/ American Experience
- Drawing paper (for Extension #1)
- Research materials – historical materials or references, internet access, etc. (for Extension #2)

Assessment: Students will be assessed through the following activities:

- Completion of Reproducible #1 – The Setting before Earth Day Worksheet and Questions
- Participation in class discussions
- Completion of Reproducible #3 – Gaylord Nelson’s Vision Worksheet and Questions
- Completion of Reproducible #5 – When the People Spoke Worksheet and Questions
- Participation in a class debate

LESSON BACKGROUND

Relevant Vocabulary:

- **Sustainable Development:** development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.²
- **Catalyst:** an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action.³
- **Grassroots movement:** the activities of a group of people or society at a local level to achieve a specific goal.⁴
- **Penance:** a voluntary act of devotion or self- mortification to show sorrow for a sin or misdeed.⁵
- **Subsidy:** a grant or gift of money.⁶
- **Political clout:** power, prestige, or influence; pull in the political realm.⁷
- **Free market:** an economic market operating by free competition.⁸
- **Pollutant:** anything that pollutes; especially, any gaseous, chemical, or organic waste that contaminates air, soil or water.⁹

Information:

A variety of concerns and experiences in the United States motivated the first Earth Day in 1970. Rachel Carson's efforts to make people aware of the dangers of chemical pesticides contributed to raising American consciousness and concern for living organisms, the environment and health. The first images of Earth from outer space also added to a rising awareness of the need to take care of our planet. Pollution of water and air were a growing concern to the American public. It seemed that there were visible signs of pollution and environmental degradation everywhere: trash hauled out to sea on barges and dumped, untreated waste discharged into rivers and open land and the disappearance of animal species. In 1969, a large pollution fire on the Cuyahoga River in Ohio shot flames high into the air, and an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California caused the death of thousands of birds, mammals and other marine organisms. These two events in particular galvanized citizens to act. The larger backdrop to these events was the threat of nuclear war and, especially, the strong sentiment against the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. United States citizens were aware that their natural environment was threatened, and they sensed that many elected officials did not share such concerns. Few environmental laws existed.

Gaylord Nelson, former governor of Wisconsin and a U.S. Senator (D – WI) in the late 1960s, saw the opportunity to bring together the concerned public and the energetic, largely student anti-war movement by generating a large environmental demonstration that would “force this issue onto the

² Barnaby, Frank. “Our Common Future: The Brundtland Commission Report.” Allen Press on behalf of Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 1987. Retrieved 28 January 2010 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4313360>.

³ “Catalyst Entry.” Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved 15 January 2010 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst>.

⁴ “Grassroots Movement Entry.” *The American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. 1981.

⁵ “Penance Entry.” *The American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. 1981.

⁶ “Subsidy Entry.” Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved 15 January 2010 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Subsidy>.

⁷ “Political Clout.” *The American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. 1981.

⁸ “Free Market Entry.” Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary. Retrieved 15 January 2010 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/free%20market>.

⁹ “Pollutant.” *The American Heritage Dictionary*. 4th ed. 1981.

national political agenda.”¹⁰ In September 1969, Sen. Nelson announced that there would be a “nationwide grassroots demonstration on behalf of the environment.”¹¹ Denis Hayes, a twenty-five-year-old enrolled at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, was named the National Coordinator of the event. As a result, the first Earth Day occurred on April 22, 1970 and included an estimated 20 million participants in the United States.¹² In October 1993, more than twenty years later, *American Heritage* magazine wrote this analysis about the event:

*On April 22, 1970, Earth Day was held; one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy...20 million people demonstrated their support...American politics and public policy would never be the same again.*¹³

The movement has continued up through today and, in 2000, Earth Day was celebrated in a record-breaking 184 countries worldwide. April 2010 marks the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day.

Resources:

- Cohen, Sheila Terman. *Gaylord Nelson: Champion for Our Earth*. Madison: Badger Biographies Series, 2010.
- Earth Days. Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/ American Experience, 2010.
- Earth Day Network, “A Short History of Earth Day,” retrieved January 2010 from <http://www.earthday.net/node/77>.
- Nelson, Gaylord. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002.
- Worldwatch Institute, “Environmental Milestones Timeline,” retrieved January 2010 from <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1083>.

LESSON STEPS

Warm Up: Many people do not remember what exactly galvanized the first Earth Day – a massive demonstration across the country involving approximately 20 million people. This lesson will help students learn what motivated that first event and what several of the results have been since.

1. If possible, present students with a visual aid or artifact related to Earth Day, such as a newspaper clipping or a poster. Ask your students what comes to mind when they see or hear “Earth Day.” Do they have any Earth Day memories or personal experiences? What are their earliest memories of Earth Day? Do they know what motivated people to organize the first Earth Day? Allow students to share their responses. Then, tell them that the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day is being celebrated in April 2010.

¹⁰ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page 7.

¹¹ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page 7.

¹² Earth Day Network, “A Short History of Earth Day,” retrieved January 2010 from <http://www.earthday.net/node/77>.

¹³ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page 11.

Activity One: *Why Earth Day?*

The first step to understanding the history and impact of Earth Day is for students to understand the events and issues that motivated the first event. Use Reproducible #1 – The Setting before Earth Day Worksheet and Questions and video clip from the film Earth Days to help students grasp why Earth Day was necessary.

1. Pass out copies of Reproducible #1 – The Setting before Earth Day Worksheet and Questions. Ask students to read the text and examine the photos to determine what environmental concerns and events were on the minds of Americans during the 1960s. Then, share their thoughts as a class. What do they think about these events and how they may have contributed to the setting and attitudes in the years leading up to Earth Day?
2. To illustrate some of these concerns, show the video clip from Earth Days. In this clip, Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day, speaks about the need for Earth Day, and Denis Hayes, the coordinator of the original Earth Day, describes how Nelson went about organizing it.¹⁴ (film chapter: Birth of a Movement, See appendix below for transcript.)
3. Explain to students that, although it might seem very strange to them that large barges of trash could be hauled and dumped in marshes or out at sea, this kind of action was legal and commonplace before 1970. Before Earth Day, there were few environmental laws and those that were in place were not particularly strong. Mention that the Clean Water Act, the Clean Drinking Water Act and Endangered Species Act came after Earth Day.
4. Review the main points of this activity: In the years leading up to Earth Day in 1970, increased environmental awareness caused many Americans to become concerned about the lack of governmental regulation of the environment and the health of the American people.

Activity Two: *What Happened on Earth Day?*

One of the best ways for students to visualize what happened on the first Earth Day is to show a video clip of footage from the day.

1. Show the video clip from Earth Days highlighting the first Earth Day.¹⁵ (film chapter: The First Earth Day) In this clip, Denis Hayes describes events of the day and archival news footage is included. Ask students to watch for: who was involved, what types of activities took place, where they took place, and how many people were involved.
2. Lead a class discussion using the following guiding questions:
 - What types of activities took place on Earth Day? *Mass demonstrations with speeches and teach-ins and other events of national and local scale, including trash pick-ups and beach clean-ups, symbolic activities such as burying an internal combustion engine, pounding cars with sledge hammers and wearing gas masks, etc.*

¹⁴ Earth Days. Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/American Experience.

¹⁵ Earth Days. Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/American Experience.

- Where did Earth Day take place? *In communities – large and small – across the country, including some 10,000 schools and 2,000 college campuses.*¹⁶
 - Who was involved? *What made Earth Day so successful was that people of all ages and political parties came together around a cause that was compelling and a shared concern for all.*
 - Why do you think people of all ages and political parties were involved? *The environment supports our very existence and should be a concern for all; all of us benefit from a healthy environment and need it to be healthy now and for future generations. Gaylord Nelson, the Democratic U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, who founded the first Earth Day, believed strongly that protecting the environment was so important that it crossed political boundaries. For this reason, among others, he asked Pete McCloskey, a Republican Congressman from California, to co-chair the event.*
 - How many people were involved? *It is estimated that 20 million people were involved across the country. Some events were small, others attracted thousands, and the largest event in New York City attracted half a million people.*
 - Do you think these demonstrations and teach-ins seemed effective? *If you are not sure, we will discuss this further in the next activity!* Do you think they would be effective today? Why or why not?
3. Pass out copies of Reproducible #3 – Gaylord Nelson’s Vision Worksheet and Questions and ask students to write down their responses to the questions. They can do this individually or in small groups. Then, discuss the questions as a class. This discussion will lead directly to the third activity.

Activity Three: *What Was the Aftermath of Earth Day?*

Seeing footage of Earth Day will not necessarily convey to students the powerful outcomes that resulted from the burgeoning movement. Many landmark environmental laws were written and passed in the decade after Earth Day. In this activity, students watch a video clip and read Gaylord Nelson’s recap of these events to understand the long-term impact of Earth Day.

1. View the video clip from Earth Days focusing on what happened after the original Earth Day.¹⁷ (film chapter: The First Earth Day)
2. Discuss the following question: What political actions were taken after Earth Day? *The “Dirty Dozen” campaign to identify members of Congress with poor environmental records; the passage of the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and many others; and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.*
3. Pass out copies of Reproducible #5 – When the People Spoke Worksheet and Questions. Have students read the text and answer the questions. They can work individually or in small groups before holding a class discussion.

¹⁶ “Grassroots Environmental Activism.” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Retrieved 28 January 2010 from <http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/events/earthday/welcome.html#grassroots>.

¹⁷ Earth Days. Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/ American Experience.

4. Consider using the extension activities below and/or further exploring the legislation of the time (see *The Environmental Decade: Impacts and Legislation* lesson plan in this unit).

Activity Four: *Is Earth Day Still Needed?*

Students consider whether Earth Day accomplished its goals and if it is still necessary through a “fishbowl” debate.

1. Arrange the room for the debate so that the class can sit in a large circle. In the center of the circle, place four chairs—with two chairs facing the other two. Place a fifth chair at one end of the other chairs, facing toward them. This fifth chair is the “hot seat.”
2. Explain to students that they will be having a debate on the following questions: “Did Earth Day accomplish its goals, and is it still needed?” Ask two people to represent the position that Earth Day did accomplish its goals. (The individuals do not have to actually hold this position, but should be able to argue the position.) These two students sit next to one another in one pair of chairs. Ask two people to represent the position that Earth Day did not fully accomplish its goals and is still needed. (Again, students don’t need to actually hold this position in order to represent this position.) Have these two people sit in the other pair of chairs.
3. Describe how the debate will work. The four students in the center of the circle will begin a conversation and outline their main ideas. After several minutes, you will announce that the “hot seat” is open. This means that students in the outer circle can visit the hot seat to participate in the debate. One person sits in the hot seat at a time to state an opinion or ask a question for the four debaters to respond to. As soon as the statement or question is made, the student returns to the outer circle. Allow the debaters to respond thoroughly before allowing the next person to sit in the hot seat.
4. After approximately 15 minutes, invite other students to become debaters. Interested students can tap the shoulder of one of the debaters and take their seat; the first debater rejoins the outer circle. Continue the debate until productive conversation and questioning has been completed. Then summarize the main points that were made. Ask students if one side was more persuasive in their arguments, and if so, why? How did it feel to be a debater versus a participant on the hot seat?

Wrap Up:

1. Review the major components of this lesson by reminding students that they learned about the social and political context that led to the organization of the first Earth Day, the actual events of the day and the political accomplishments that were a result of Earth Day.
2. Discuss with students if this lesson/debate has changed their idea of Earth Day. Do they have a better understanding of Earth Day? What was the original intention of Earth Day? Was it successful? Does Earth Day have the same intent today? Will students do anything differently to celebrate Earth Day now and in the future?

Extension:

1. *Draw Political Cartoons* – Hand out copies of Reproducible # 7 – America the Sustainable. It depicts the artist’s concern for the environment, America and Earth. The cartoon is divided into three different scenes, each of which captures a particular theme or event. Invite students to create their own cartoon. Like the example, they can divide the cartoon into blocks – each depicting a specific event or theme – and they can create text to a tune or song. How are their concerns similar or different from those that presented in this cartoon?

Remind students that Earth Day resulted in many political changes, particularly new environmental laws. You could ask students to extend their cartoon to include scenes of a modern Earth Day and scenes of people successfully addressing current concerns. What would a modern Earth Day look like? What scenes could they add to their cartoon to visualize progress? What tune would they use for their text?

2. *Further Research of Important Environmental Events Since 1960* – Visit Worldwatch Institute’s “Environmental Milestones,” a timeline of key environmental events from the 1960s to today. There is a free online version of this timeline at this link: <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1083>. You may also refer to #5 – When the People Spoke Worksheet and Questions.

Have students research one of the milestones included on the timeline or one of the laws from the Reproducible #5 – When the People Spoke Worksheet and Questions. They can work individually or in groups. The timeline includes important books, global conferences, treaties, people and key environmental catastrophes. Classes could focus on any one of these areas, a particular decade or simply choose topics of individual interest. Students will likely need to use the internet to do much of their research. Ask students to write a paper, make a class presentation or display information on their topic.

CONCLUSION

Students examined the social and political context that inspired the first Earth Day, reviewed video clips of the events of the first Earth Day, and comprehended that many environmental laws were put in place as a result of Earth Day. Students considered questions about politics, democracy, and the role of citizens in a democracy, as well as debated whether the goals of Earth Day have been accomplished.

LESSON PLAN CREDITS

Margaret Pennock – Author

Curricula Writer, Earth Day Network
Middle School Science Teacher, Sidwell Friends School

David Wood – Author

Curricula Writer, Earth Day Network
8th Grade Science Teacher, Sidwell Friends School

Brenna Holzauer – Author, Editor

Education Manager, Earth Day Network

Sean S. Miller – Editor

Education Director, Earth Day Network

Maggie Ollove – Researcher

Education Associate, Earth Day Network

The Setting before Earth Day

“I remember what America was like before Earth Day; the Cuyahoga River burned for a week with flames five stories high; Lake Erie was declared dead. As a boy, I was warned not to swim in the Hudson, the Potomac, or the Charles Rivers. I recall how black smoke billowed from the stacks in Washington, D.C., so that we had to dust daily for soot, and how on some days, you could not see the length of a city block. I remember in 1963 when the eastern anatum peregrine falcon – arguably America’s most spectacular predatory bird – went extinct, poisoned out of existence by DDT.”¹⁸

– Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Photos 1 - 2: Fire on the Cuyahoga River



19



20

Photos 1 and 2 show firefighters battling a fire on Ohio's Cuyahoga River on November 3, 1952. The 1969 blaze, one of nine on the river since 1868, received little interest from locals as it was not an uncommon occurrence and the short thirty minute fire did not attract photographers. The fire, however, grabbed national attention because it came at a time of increased environmental awareness and symbolized years of environmental neglect. Here's a description that printed in *Time Magazine*:

Some River! Chocolate-brown, oily, bubbling with subsurface gases, it oozes rather than flows. "Anyone who falls into the Cuyahoga does not drown," Cleveland's citizens joke grimly. "He decays". . . The Federal Water Pollution Control Administration dryly notes: "The lower Cuyahoga has no visible signs of life, not even low forms such as leeches and sludge worms that usually thrive on wastes." It is also -- literally -- a fire hazard.²¹

¹⁸ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page xi.

¹⁹ “Cuyahoga River Fire.” Photograph. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: 200th. Retrieved 29 January from http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/events/earthday/cuyohoga_fire.html.

²⁰ Thomas, James. “Cuyahoga River Fire.” Photograph. Cleveland State University Library. Retrieved 29 January from <http://www.epa.gov/region5/news/features/cuyahoga40th.html>.

²¹ “Environment: The Cities: The Price of Optimism.” *Time Magazine*. August, 1969.

Photo 3: Pollution of Lake Erie²²



Photo 3 shows the polluted orange-brown water of the Cuyahoga River feeding into Lake Erie, where dead fish and fowl were a frequent sight on the shores in the late 1960s. This further garnered criticism for Ohio, as the media embarrassed officials with calls for clean water legislation, and led to mass clean-ups of the lake.

Photos 4 - 7: Santa Barbara Oil Spill²³



On January 29, 1969, the Santa Barbara, California coast experienced the brunt of the worst oil spill until that point in U.S. history. The spill, which brought 200,000 gallons of crude oil to the surface along more than 35 miles of beach, is generally acknowledged as an impetus to the environmental movement. Eleven days were needed to get the oil under control, but effects were felt long after by the plants, animals and the natural environment of the area.²⁴

²² Schafer, Jim. "Pollution of Lake Erie." Photograph. Cleveland.com. Retrieved 29 January from http://www.cleveland.com/science/index.ssf/2009/06/cuyahoga_river_fire_40_years_a.html.

²³ "Santa Barbara Oil Spill." Photographs. University of California, Santa Barbara. Retrieved 29 January from http://www.es.ucsb.edu/general_info/eshistory.php.

²⁴ Hemphill, Jeffrey J. "The Santa Barbara Oil Spill: A Retrospective." University of California, Santa Barbara. Retrieved 29 January 2010 from http://www.geog.ucsb.edu/~jeff/sb_69oilspill/santa_barbara_1969_oilspill.pdf.

Photo 8: Peregrine Falcon²⁵



The American peregrine falcon, which has few natural predators, was nearly incapacitated by increased use of the insecticide DDT in the post-WWII time period. By 1964, the eastern peregrine falcon was extinct in the United States. DDT worked its way up the food chain as eagles and other raptors, small birds and mammals ingested prey contaminated with the pesticide. DDT also caused the thinning of eggshells which affected birthing populations. With the banning of DDT in 1972, along with other efforts, the western peregrine experienced a resurgence in population, though they are still under watch, throughout the United States.²⁶

Photos 9 - 10: Pollution of Our Air²⁷ and Water²⁸



The modern environmental movement brought national attention to the increased contamination of the United States' water and air. Photo 9 is an example of air pollution from smokestacks before emission control equipment was installed, while Photo 10 shows the damages from a tanker collision with a barge in January 1973 on the Mississippi River.

²⁵ Kosack, Joe. "American Peregrine Falcon." PGC Photo.

²⁶ "American Peregrine Falcon: A Success Story." Chesapeake Bay Field Office. Retrieved 28 January 2010 from <http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/EndSppWeb/peregrine/peregrinefalcon.htm>

"Grassroots Environmental Activism." National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Retrieved 28 January 2010 from <http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/events/earthday/welcome.html#grassroots>

²⁷ "Smokestacks Prior to Emission Controls." Photograph. National Park Service.

²⁸ Messina, John for Series: DOCUMERICA: The Environmental Protection Agency's Program to Photographically Document Subjects of Environmental Concern, compiled 1972 – 1977.

Name:
Date:

The Setting before Earth Day Questions

Please answer the following questions.

1. What were the major concerns that Americans had about their environment in the 1960s?
2. How did these concerns relate to the health of American people?
3. Which of these events or issues do you consider to be the most alarming?

Name:

Date:

The Setting before Earth Day ANSWER KEY

Please answer the following questions.

1. What were the major concerns that Americans had about their environment in the 1960s?

Air and water pollution, chemical pesticides, endangered species, etc.

2. How did these concerns relate to the health of American people?

Air pollution relates to respiratory health issues such as asthma; water pollution affects people's access to clean drinking water, which can cause disease and long-term developmental issues; chemical pesticides and effects on health due to environmental exposure or diet. Many of these pollutants also concentrate as they move up the food chain, resulting in more serious and long-term health issues for humans.

3. Which of these events or issues do you consider to be the most alarming?

Answers will vary.

Name:

Date:

Gaylord Nelson's Vision

Introduction and Directions: Gaylord Nelson was the former governor of Wisconsin and a U.S. Senator from 1963-1981. He was an avid environmentalist, and Earth Day was Gaylord Nelson's vision. Please read the quotes below from Nelson's book *Beyond Earth Day* and answer the questions at the end.

1. "Intellectually, we finally have come to understand that the wealth of this nation is its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity. Take this resource base away, and all that is left is a wasteland. That's the whole economy. That's where all the economic activity and all the jobs come from. These biological systems contain the sustaining wealth of the world" (page 157).
2. "We will not succeed in forging an economically and environmentally sustainable society until all key social, political, economic, and religious groups are on board. If labor, business, or any other major group is opposed to doing what is necessary to achieve sustainability, it probably won't happen" (page 11).
3. "...we should not be blind to the fact that, for companies, Earth Day is merely an occasion to put on their Sunday best one day a year... In short, the company that buys into Earth Day once a year but that fails to clean up its act plays the same game as the individual who picks up litter one day and year but fails to be a good steward of the planet every other day. Earth Day is not a day of penance for America. It was founded on a spirit of desire and a sense of duty—as a means to an end, not as an end. Let us keep that spirit alive and our goal clear" (page 11).
4. "Contrary to what some Earth Day critics today might say, my thinking was not that a one-day demonstration would convince people of the need to protect the environment. I envisioned a continuing national drive to clean up our environment and set new priorities for a livable America. Earth Day was to be the catalyst" (page 11).
5. "That first Earth Day showed that environmental activism on a broad scale was not only possible but powerful, as people across the spectrum of American life demanded that the right to a decent environment be adopted as a fundamental aim of society. The demonstration marked more than a national holiday for the Earth. It was about the people sending a message and setting an agenda. It was about sparking a landmark grassroots movement" (page 14).



Photo: WHI Image ID 56854, from Cohen, Sheila Terman. *Gaylord Nelson: Champion for Our Earth*. Madison: Badger Biographies Series, 2010.

6. In October 1993, more than twenty years later *American Heritage* magazine would write this about the event:

On April 22, 1970, Earth Day was held; one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy...20 million people demonstrated their support...American politics and public policy would never be the same again (page 14).²⁹

²⁹ Gordon, Josh Steele. "The American Environment." *American Heritage Magazine* 44:6 Oct. 1993.

Questions for Gaylord Nelson's Vision:

1. Why does Gaylord Nelson believe it is so important to take care of our environment?
2. Based on these first two paragraphs, what do you think Nelson's ultimate goal is?
3. Why do you think Gaylord Nelson felt so strongly about including all people (people of every religion, political party, age group...) in Earth Day?
4. What does Nelson mean when he says, "Earth Day is not a penance for America?"
5. What does Nelson mean when he says that Earth Day should be viewed as a "means to an end, not as an end?" What role did he see Earth Day playing?
6. In the fifth quote, Nelson writes that Earth Day "was about people sending a message and setting an agenda." What was message that American citizens were sending? To whom? What was their agenda? Why?
7. Why do you think *American Heritage* magazine felt Earth Day was "one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy?"
8. In the last paragraph, what did Gaylord Nelson mean by a "grassroots movement?"

Gaylord Nelson's Vision ANSWER KEY

1. Why does Gaylord Nelson believe it is so important to take care of our environment? *He understands that, ultimately, our economic system, jobs, health, and well-being are reliant on a healthy environment. Healthy natural systems and the variety of life on this planet make it possible for life to thrive on planet Earth.*
2. Based on these first two paragraphs, what do you think Nelson's ultimate goal is? *A sustainable society – a society that understands and values nature and the natural laws that provide for us; a society that takes care of its environment and resources in such a way that allows future generations a healthy and prosperous life.*
3. Why do you think Gaylord Nelson felt so strongly about including all people (people of every religion, political party, age group...) in Earth Day? *The environment supports the lives of everybody – so protecting it is an issue for everyone. He also alludes to the fact that some groups of people can stand in the way of protecting the environment for political or personal gain.*
4. What does Nelson mean when he says, "Earth Day is not a penance for America?" *Earth Day is much more than a one-day action as a punishment or to show sorrow for any wrongdoing with regard to the environment. There is a larger goal of long-term change in perspective and behavior.*
5. What does Nelson mean when he says that Earth Day should be viewed as a "means to an end, not as an end?" What role did he see Earth Day playing? *Earth Day is one step toward a larger goal of sustainability. The goal isn't to have Earth Day once each year. Earth Day 1970 was the catalyst to get us focused on the larger goal of long-term cultural and societal change.*
6. In the fifth quote, Nelson writes that Earth Day "was about people sending a message and setting an agenda." What was message that American citizens were sending? To whom? What was their agenda? Why? *Americans were trying to let their elected officials know that the environment was of great concern, and they wanted the government to represent them by taking action to protect it.*
7. Why do you think *American Heritage* magazine felt Earth Day was "one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy?" *Democracy generally refers to a government by the people, which is exercised by citizens or the officials they elect. Americans were exercising their right to express themselves and communicating to their elected officials what was important to them. They were helping to set a new political agenda involving protecting the environment.*
8. In the last paragraph, what did Gaylord Nelson mean by a "grassroots movement?" *Grassroots refers to citizens working together for a common cause and, as a result, becoming politically influential or active. The ability to participate in civic life in this way is an important aspect of our democracy in the U.S.*

Name:

Date:

When the People Spoke

Directions: Below is Gaylord Nelson's description of what happened after Earth Day from his book *Beyond Earth Day*, and a quote from him about the role of laws in our democracy. Please read the text and answer the questions at the end.

"The public spoke with one voice at that first event, and its message was heard. The same year, President Richard Nixon created the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Congress passed an amended federal Clean Air Act. In the decade that followed, twenty-eight other significant environmental laws were enacted - more environmental legislation than Congress had passed in all the years since the adoption of the Constitution. Some of those laws built upon and strengthened earlier measures, such as the Clean Air act, and the Clean Water Act. Others set the foundation for environmental education in the schools and basic environmental protections that many Americans now take for granted, among them the Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act."³⁰

Major federal environmental initiatives since Earth Day 1970:³¹

- 1970 Environmental Protection Agency is created by executive order
- 1970 Clean Air Act (1967 act amended)
- 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
- 1972 Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments)
- 1972 Coastal Zone Management Act
- 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act
- 1972 Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act
- 1973 Endangered Species Act
- 1974 Energy Supply and Environmental Coordination Act
- 1974 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act
- 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act
- 1974 Deepwater Port Act
- 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act
- 1975 National Environmental Policy Act Amendments
- 1976 National Forest Management Act
- 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act
- 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
- 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act
- 1976 Federal Coal Leasing Act Amendments

³⁰ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page 11- 13.

³¹ Gaylord Nelson. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. The University of Wisconsin Press. 2002, page 13.

Questions for When the People Spoke

Based on what you have learned about Earth Day, please answer the following questions. Relate your answers specifically to Earth Day.

1. Why are politics and government necessary? What purpose does government serve and what is the role of the grassroots movement?
2. Rachel Carson, author of the landmark environmental book *Silent Spring* (1962), believed that a healthy environment should be guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights.³² Do you agree? Why or why not? Why do you think it is not part of our Bill of Rights?
3. In what ways does the American political system provide opportunities for people to participate and advocate for change? How did Americans show support for environmental change on Earth Day?
4. In your opinion, what responsibilities do you think citizens have in helping to protect our environment for current and future generations? Why?

³² Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962.

Questions for When the People Spoke ANSWER KEY

Based on what you have learned about Earth Day, please answer the following questions. Relate your answers specifically to Earth Day.

1. Why are politics and government necessary? What purpose does government serve and what is the role of the grassroots movement? *Government is necessary to write and pass laws (at the federal, state, and local levels). The grassroots movement puts political pressure on elected officials to listen and act on the concerns of the citizens they serve.*
2. Rachel Carson, author of the landmark environmental book *Silent Spring* (1962), believed that a healthy environment should be guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights. Do you agree? Why or why not? Why do you think it is not part of our Bill of Rights? *Answers will vary. In Silent Spring, Rachel Carson wrote, "If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem."*³³
3. In what ways does the American political system provide opportunities for people to participate and advocate for change? How did Americans show support for environmental change on Earth Day? *Citizens are allowed to organize, meet, speak out, and demonstrate. This is not allowed in all countries, especially when citizens are expressing discontent with the government. With the American people expressing their concerns so clearly on Earth Day, elected officials realized they needed to fulfill their duties to act on those concerns or risk not being elected again. As a result, they passed many laws, without which, there would have been little to no regulation of people's and industry's impacts on the environment. Individual citizens also organized specific tactics such as the "Dirty Dozen," which provided voters with information about the environmental voting records of specific politicians that could be used in deciding whom to vote for.*
4. In your opinion, what responsibilities do you think citizens have in helping to protect our environment for current and future generations? Why? *Answers will vary. Possibilities include: making an effort to be informed and knowledgeable about the environment and how it affects us, taking individual responsibility to live a lifestyle that supports the health of the environment, being an educated voter and exercising your right to vote, taking the time and making the effort to work with others for a better society, educating others, etc.*

³³ Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962.

America the Sustainable³⁴

By Emily Schaller and Josh Volinsky

³⁴ Cartoon Credit: “America the Sustainable”: Emily Schaller and Josh Volinsky. Earth Day Network. 2010.

Appendix³⁵

Gaylord Nelson in archival footage CARD (see lower thirds)	If the people really understood that in the lifetime of their children they're going to have destroyed the quality of the air and the water all over the world and uh perhaps made the globe unlivable in a half century they'd do something about it. But this is not well understood.
Stewart Udall (Gaylord Nelson in archival footage)	Senator Gaylord Nelson
Stewart Udall Interview CARD (see lower thirds)	Was one of my very best friends. He was a great Governor of Wisconsin and he was a great conservationist.
Stewart Udall (Gaylord Nelson in archival footage)	He was the one who said, "why not have teach-ins about the environment all over the country" and this is what became the first Earth Day in 1970.
Denis Hayes (Gaylord Nelson in archival footage)	Gaylord cared passionately about conservation issues throughout his entire career.
Gaylord Nelson in archival footage	...Efficient, clean, cheap, mass transportation which is what this country must come to...(applause)
Denis Hayes (Gaylord Nelson in archival footage)	He had decided to set up a stirring committee to make this begin to happen.
Denis Hayes Interview	He'd enlisted already Pete McCloskey a republican congressman from California
Denis Hayes (McCloskey seen in archival footage)	who was an ardent environmentalist to co-chair it with him.
Pete McCloskey in archival footage	The preservation of the environment is going to have to be a very top item for that reason I am just delighted to support it.
Pete McCloskey Interview	The republican party in my lifetime had been an environmental party,
Pete McCloskey (archival footage, McCloskey in archival footage)	But man by 1970 it was hard to find republicans who put the environment anywhere in their top five list of priorities. But Gaylord wanted it to be bi-partisan.
Pete McCloskey Interview	So he said, "Pete will you be co-chairman?" I said, "will I be co-chairman?" It meant everything that I wanted to do in the world.
Pete McCloskey (Denis Hayes in archival footage)	So I think it was in December-January of 1970 that we hired Denis Hayes to be the director. And Denis comes to Washington with about 20 or 30 kids that are about 18 to 22 at the oldest and they sent out newsletters all over the country to every student body president, 10,000 high schools, a couple of thousand colleges, would you like to

³⁵ Earth Days. Dir. Robert Stone. PBS/ American Experience, 2010.

	have an Earth Day on April 22?
Denis Hayes (archival footage)	What we were trying to do was to create a brand new public consciousness that would cause the rules of the game to change. It was somewhat ironic for something named Earth Day...
Denis Hayes Interview	to be entirely focused on the United States but remember we had virtually no money. We had incredible
Denis Hayes (archival footage)	Aspirations but there was no world wide web, there was no internet, no blogs, there was no email, no instant messaging, there was none of the kind of web activism that is possible today. The newsletters that were sent to people across the country were all printed by the United Autoworkers. The United Autoworkers were the largest single contributors financially, and other wise to Earth Day.

CARD	April 22, 1970
Denis Hayes (archival footage of Earth Day)	I began Earth Day with a sunrise ceremony in Washington DC. Then I flew up to New York. Mayor Lindsay had shut down 5 th Avenue and we basically filled it all up. The fact that we managed to have our largest event in what was then the center of all media coverage was advantageous.
NBC Anchor: archival footage	Earth Day demonstrations began in practically every city and town in the United States this morning. The first massive nationwide protest against the pollution of the environment. In Washington there was an awesome Earth Day warning from a government scientist, Dr. Jay Murray Mitchell said pollution and over-pollution unless checked could so warm the earth in 200 years as to create a greenhouse effect melting the arctic ice cap and flooding vast areas of the world.
Denis Hayes (archival Earth Day footage)	Nationally Earth Day was the largest demonstration ever in American history. Some events had half a million people in them and we had an estimated 20 million across the country.
CBS Anchor Walter Cronkite archival footage	Some quarters saw more than coincidence in the fact that Earth Day occurred on the 100 th anniversary of the birth of Lenin, the father of Soviet communism. The Comptroller General of Georgia James Bentley sent out some \$1,600 worth of telegrams warning that Earth Day might be a communist plot.
Denis Hayes (archival Earth Day footage)	There were certainly people who had their pet causes. Some pounded vehicles apart with sledgehammers as a protest against the internal combustion engine. Others wore gas masks to protest air pollution, but also there was an almost celebratory thing where it was as though we were being awakening to a new set of opportunities.
Denis Hayes (seen in archival Earth Day footage)	They are talking about emissions control on automobiles, while we are talking about bans on automobiles. We are challenging the ethics of a society that with only 6% of the population accounts for more than half of its utilization of resources. Our country is stealing from the

	poorer countries of the world and from generations as yet unborn.
Hunter Lovins (archival footage of Earth Day)	To me, Earth Day was life changing. There were around the country millions of people engaging in some act of caring for the earth. I realized that there was a massive group of people who cared very deeply about the earth and if organized could be a viable political movement. At that point,
Hunter Lovins Interview	I ceased to be an anti-war activist and became an environmentalist.
(Archival footage of Earth Day)	“Save our Earth” chanting. Senator Edmund Muskie: I’ve been at three of these gatherings today and let me say this to you, that you can’t stand in front of a group like this without feeling the power which can flow from it. And so what we must do is make every day Earth Day.
CBS reporter at Earth Day (archival footage)	Daniel Schorr: It was from Washington that a 25 year old Denis Hayes started to organize this nationwide thing and it is here that he has returned tonight to say that thing is now a movement, and like Vietnam, an anti-establishment movement.
Denis Hayes (speaking in archival Earth Day footage)	We are systematically destroying our land, our streams, and our seas. We foul our air...
Denis Hayes (in archival Earth Day footage)	It was a huge high adrenaline effort that in the end genuinely changed things. Before there were people that opposed freeways, there were people that opposed clear-cutting, or people worried about pesticides;
Denis Hayes Interview	They didn’t think of themselves as having anything in common. After Earth Day they were all part of an environmental movement.

Denis Hayes (archival footage)	Immediately after Earth Day, we chose to get involved in something that we hadn’t really paid any attention to before Earth Day—organized formal politics—elections.
Denis Hayes Interview	We came up with a campaign called the dirty dozen that targeted twelve members of congress with terrible environmental records.
Denis Hayes reads off names in archival footage, photos of congressmen	The dirty dozen are: E. Ross Adair of Indiana, William Ayers of Ohio, William Cowger of Kentucky, David Dennis of Indiana, George Fallon of Maryland, John Kyl of Iowa, Earl Landgrebe of Indiana, Odin Langden of Minnesota, Byron Rogers of Colorado, Henry Shadeberg from Wisconsin, Lawrence Winn of Kansas, and Roger Zion of Indiana.
Denis Hayes (newspaper graphics), photo of Fallon	We beat seven of the twelve members of the Dirty Dozen, including the Chairman of the Public Works Committee, a guy named George Fallon out of Baltimore who was funding all kinds of environmental monsters. People were saying, “You took out George Fallon?!” I mean he was clearly one of the two or three most powerful members of congress.
Pete McCloskey	And when Congress reconvened in January everybody now said, “I’m

Interview CARD (see lower thirds)	an environmentalist!" I mean there was a force out there that had taken out seven incumbents.
Archival footage	We propose the establishment of a joint House-Senate committee on the environment to expand the congressional capacity to deal with environment--The frightening hazards and environmental offenses over which we have had little, up 'til this time, in the way of control.
CBS Reporter Daniel Schorr outside the White House (archival footage)	President Nixon sent this report to congress today an assessment of the nation's environmental problems and ideas on how to solve them.
Schorr continues (Nixon seen in archival footage)	He sounded the familiar warning of ecological disaster, but counseled against panic or hysteria.
Pete McCloskey	In the next four years, '71-'74 we passed Clean Water, Clean Air, Endangered Species, Estuarine Protection, Coastal Zone Protection, Marine Mammal Protection and a lot of that went through my little subcommittee.
Stewart Udall (archival footage of White House and Nixon)	I think President Nixon was looking forward to the next election. Was he going to veto the Clean Air Clean Water bill? No! He signed it with a flourish. And then proposed the creation of what is now,
Stewart Udall Interview	Still, the Environmental Protection Agency to enforce these pollution laws.
Stewart Udall (archival footage)	We got environmental impact statements; you had to look at the downside as well as the upside of any technological project. That was revolutionary because it gave people the power to challenge unlimited technological growth.
Stewart Udall Interview	Nixon deserves credit for what he did and I'm not sure he even understood it but he got behind it.