



Exceptional Educational Journeys

GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY: From You to the UN



PREFACE

This guide is for English and Social Studies teachers who want to inform their students about the United Nations, activism, and creating a sustainable future from several angles: economic, environmental, social, and more. The week-long plan will cover the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals—and more importantly, why they matter. Through “The Starfish Story,” literature about the UN, teenage activist Greta Thunberg’s speech to the UN, and the UN’s “Lazy Person’s Guide to Saving the World,” students will learn,

synthesize and apply knowledge to construct informed opinions on why sustainability matters and how we can accomplish it.

By the end of the week, pairs of students will take ownership of one Sustainable Development Goal by creating a presentation to teach the SDG to the rest of the class.

These lessons are aligned to Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies for grades 9-12. The one-week unit touches on ELA Reading (Informational Texts) and Speaking & Listening standards. Alignment for Literacy in History/Social Studies includes Integration of Knowledge & Ideas and Key Ideas & Details (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leandra Beabout taught high school English at Concord High School in Elkhart, IN, before transitioning to a brief career in newspaper journalism. She now splits her time between teaching online English classes, freelance writing, and content marketing. She attended middle school in Slovakia, taught English in Uganda, and most recently returned from a trip to Croatia. She travels and writes as often as possible.

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CONTACT US

General Information

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LESSON OVERVIEW

DAY 1

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
5 min.	<p>1. Bell Ringer activity: As students enter the classroom, instruct them to read “The Starfish Story.” This can be printed or projected at the front of the room. After reading, students will do a timed quick write (~5 minutes) prompted by three questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the message of “The Starfish Story?” • What event or situation does this remind you of in your own life? • What connections can you make to “The Starfish Story” and another text we’ve read, something you’ve seen in the news, etc.? 	<p>Paper, writing utensils, whiteboard/ projection screen</p> <p>The Starfish Story</p>
5 min.	<p>2. Debrief. Ask a few students to share their answers. Guide the conversation toward addressing why we do or don’t feel compelled to help with issues that seem “too big” or beyond our circles of influence.</p>	
20 min.	<p>3. What is the United Nations?</p> <p>Provide an overview of the United Nations’ history and purpose. This will create a foundation of knowledge for the rest of the week. Students should use the handout provided to take notes during the lesson. Key points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason for creation of the UN in 1945. • The UN’s 4 main purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining worldwide peace & security - Developing relations among nations - Fostering cooperation between nations to solve social, cultural, economic, or humanitarian international problems - Providing a forum to bring countries together to discuss the UN’s purposes and goals • 193 countries belong to the United Nations 	<p>IEP/504 Plan accommodations: <i>Teacher may provide completed notes of the main points as a modification.</i></p> <p>These resources can be used in class or for the teacher to prepare beforehand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How Does the UN work? - UN ‘About Us’ page - UN ‘What We Do’ page - “What is the UN?” lesson study.com <p>Handout for students to take notes (page 10)</p>

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
10 min.	<p>4. Recent UN Goals</p> <p>Explain to students that the UN strives to maintain its four main purposes by regularly creating goals. At the turn of the century, the UN set Millennium Development Goals.</p> <p>After today's lesson, students will focus on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which were created in 2015 for the year 2030. But before moving on to current goals, students will learn about progress made between 2000 and 2015.</p> <p>Watch the vlogbrothers clip from 2015, just before the UN meeting that established the SDG: Looking Back at the Millennium Development Goals</p>	<p>Screen/projector to watch YouTube video of the UN Millennium Development Goals.</p> <p>Looking Back at the Millennium Development Goals</p>
15 min.	<p>5. Current UN Goals (SDGs)</p> <p>Watch the TED talk "How Can We Make the World a Better Place by 2030?" for an overview of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), our current goals for 2030!</p>	<p>Screen/projector to watch YouTube video of the TED talk:</p> <p>How Can We Make the World a Better Place by 2030?</p> <p>UN SDGS for 2030</p>
5 min.	<p>6. Exit slip: Instruct students to get out a scrap of paper/sticky note and write <i>one sentence</i> stating which SDG stood out most (e.g. no poverty, zero hunger, quality education) and why.</p> <p>Students can turn in the paper or put the sticky note on the board as they leave the room.</p>	<p>Paper/sticky notes</p>

DAY 2

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
5 min.	<p>1. Bell Ringer activity: As students enter the classroom, instruct them to get out a piece of paper. Students will do a timed quick write (3-5 minutes) prompted by two questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one of the biggest problems in the world today? • What small thing could you do to be part of the solution to this problem? 	Paper, writing utensils, whiteboard/ projection screen for prompts
15 min.	<p>2. Small group discussion. Divide students into six groups.</p> <p>Pass out The Guardian’s “Young people are angry:’ the teenage activists shaping our future.” Assign each group an activist to read about.</p> <p>Groups should read their section, identify the issue the activist wants to solve, and discuss <i>what specific actions</i> the teenage activist is taking. Finally, group members should have a respectful discussion about why (or not) they think this issue is important.</p>	<p>The Guardian: “Young people are angry:’ the teenage activists shaping our future”</p> <p>Alternative article from Huck Magazine for large classes</p>
20-25 min.	<p>3. Whole class analysis and discussion: Instruct each group to share their activist’s issue along with the group’s conclusion about the topic.</p> <p>As a class, match each activist’s issue to an SDG. Discuss how being passionate about an issue might not require tackling an entire SDG—but many small actions add up.</p>	Project the 17 SDGs on the screen during this discussion.

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
10 min.	<p>4. Introduce students to young climate activist Greta Thunberg by showing TIME Magazine's video clip.</p> <p>Briefly scroll through the timeline of Thunberg's efforts on the projector/screen as a class. This will give students a general overview of how quickly the movement caught on.</p>	<p>Screen/projector for video about Greta Thunberg</p> <p>Timeline of Greta Thunberg's efforts</p>
<5 min.	<p>5. Instruct students to get out a scrap of paper/sticky note and write down 1-3 world issues/problems they feel passionate about (they can use ones they read about today or suggest new ideas).</p>	<p>Paper/sticky notes</p> <p>Homework assignment: Students should read this TIME Magazine article about Thunberg.</p>

DAY 3

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
5 min.	<p>1. Bell Ringer activity: Pop quiz! Students should get out a half-sheet of paper and answer the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your own words, define the United Nations. <i>Key components to answer: international organization, promotes peace/security, pushes countries to cooperate to solve global problems</i> 2. What are three of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals? <i>Any three or the 17 can be used.</i> 3. Who was Greta Thunberg inspired by when she first started striking for climate change? <i>She was inspired by the survivors of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.</i> 	<p>Paper, writing utensils, whiteboard/projection screen for quiz questions</p>
5 min.	<p>2. Review</p> <p>Review answers to the quiz questions and clarify any misunderstandings from information students learned at the beginning of the week.</p>	

Time	Lesson Steps	Materials
15 min.	<p>3. Assessing the situation Explain that though the UN is a giant organization with big goals, there are individuals who say this group is not doing enough. Real change requires action from leaders and everyday people.</p> <p>Watch Thunberg's speech to the UN in which she criticizes the organization's efforts for climate change (3 ½ minutes).</p> <p>Ask the class (and allow for a quick discussion if time allows): What do you think? Does she have a right to criticize?</p>	<p>Projector/screen for watching YouTube video of Thunberg's speech to the UN</p>
5-10 min.	<p>4. Project Assignment</p> <p>Pass out copies of the pdf. Explain to students that they will spend the rest of the week using this resource along with internet research to create a presentation that covers one SDG.</p> <p>Pass out project presentation assignment sheet.</p> <p>Divide the class evenly into groups of 2-4 and assign each group a Sustainable Development Goal.</p>	<p>Copies of the pdf "The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World"</p> <p>Copies of project presentation assignment sheet (page 9)</p> <p>List of UN Sustainable Development Goals</p>
Remainder of class	<p>5. Work time.</p> <p>Students should meet with their groups, create an action plan for the next day, and dive into their research.</p>	<p>Computers or computer lab</p>

DAY 4

(Depending on the students and group sizes, some teachers might opt for two full research days.)

This entire class period will be spent in the library or computer lab. Students should work on their project presentation at all times, and the teacher should be available for clarification and assistance as needed.

DAY 5 (this might take two days)

Presentations!

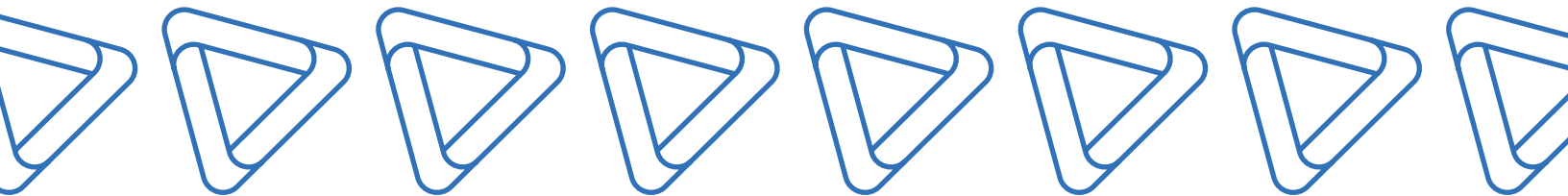
Sustainable Development Goal Presentation

Group Members:

Assigned SDG:

Your Job:

- a. In 3-5 minutes, your group will present your assigned SDG and why it is important to the class.
- b. Your presentation will include a visual element (poster, PowerPoint, Piktochart, etc.).
- c. Your presentation will include a suggestion for how *you* can tackle this problem today and how local/state *leaders* could tackle this problem today.
- d. You must cite at least **3** sources in your presentation.



STUDENT HANDOUT

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The United Nations is an _____ organization founded in _____.
2. The United Nations has four primary purposes:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
3. A total of _____, countries belong to the United Nations.

*Bonus: What countries are **not** members?*

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945.
2. The United Nations has four primary purposes:
 - a. Maintaining worldwide peace & security
 - b. Developing relations among nations
 - c. Fostering cooperation between nations in order to solve social, cultural, economic, or humanitarian international problems
 - d. Providing a forum to bring countries together to discuss the UN's purposes and goals
3. A total of 193, countries belong to the United Nations.

*Bonus: What countries are **not** members?*

Vatican City and Palestine

RESOURCES LIBRARY

DAY 1

- **The Starfish Story:** <https://www.rwc4reading.com/the-starfish/>
- **How Does the UN work?:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qolafzc0k74>
- **UN ‘About Us’ page:** <https://www.un.org/en/about-un/>
- **UN ‘What We Do’ page:** <https://www.un.org/en/our-work>
- **“What is the UN?”:** <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-the-united-nations-definition-history-members-purpose.html>
- **Millennium Development Goals:** <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
- **Looking Back at the Millennium Development Goals:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5DZF7YvwwM>
- **How Can We Make the World a Better Place by 2030?:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o08ykAqLOxk>
- **List of UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals:** <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

DAY 2

- **Teenage Activists Shaping the Future (The Guardian):** <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/13/young-people-are-angry-meet-the-teenage-activists-shaping-our-future>
- **Teenage Activists Protesting Worldwide (Huck Mag):** <https://www.huckmag.com/perspectives/activism-2/teenage-activists-protest-worldwide-agents-of-change/>
- **Greta Thunberg – Next Generation of Leaders (TIME):** <https://time.com/collection-post/5584902/greta-thunberg-next-generation-leaders/>

DAY 3

- **Greta Thunberg’s Speech to the United Nations:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFkQSGyeCWg>
- **Lazy Person’s Guide to Saving the World:** <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/LazyPersonGuide.pdf>

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