Nature Near and Far

Whether we intend to or not, many of our daily activities impact nature. Modernization has made many of our connections with nature invisible. The first step in creating a healthy, interconnected world is making those invisible connections visible to ourselves and our students. In this activity, students will reflect on whether humans are a part of nature or not, and how connected they are to people and places around the world.

Objectives:
Students will be able to:
• Reflect on how connected their life is to people and nature in other parts of the world.
• Notice trends in survey data from the class and see that most people have lives very closely linked with nature.

Materials:
• Connected World Survey
  • PDF version
  • Editable version
• Connected World Fact Sheet
  • PDF version
  • Editable version

Process:
1. Make sure every student has a piece of paper and a writing utensil, and then direct students to draw a picture of nature. Give students at least 5 minutes to draw. This can be done together in person or students can do this on their own at home.
   a) Provide prompts for students if they feel stuck. Examples include:
      • What part of the world are you thinking about?
      • What lives there?
      • Is there more than one kind of plant or animal there?
   b) *optional modification* Students can write a story about things they’ve seen in nature instead.
2. Conduct a whole group discussion about the students’ drawings. Poll the class about what was included in their pictures.
   a) How many students drew plants?
   b) How many drew animals?
   c) How many drew humans?
   d) How many drew buildings or roads?
3. Ask the class whether they think humans are a part of nature. Allow students to respond to each other and prompt them to give specific reasons for why they agree or disagree. Finally, poll the whole class using the question: Are humans part of nature? Make sure all students commit to a yes or no answer and record the result.
4. Direct students to take the Connected World Survey. They should mark off every statement that’s true for them. They may find some of the statements silly, but encourage them to answer fully and truthfully.

5. Once all students have completed their survey, tell them to add up their scores. What were the highest and lowest scores, and which score came up the most often?
   a) *optional extension* Create a bar graph of the scores for the class. If class is taking place in person, create a graph ahead of time and invite students to add an X or a post-it note above their score. This would also allow students to report their score with more anonymity.
   • If the class is taking place digitally, consider using a free online polling website like polleverywhere.com to collect results quickly and anonymously.

6. Distribute the Connected World Fact Sheet, and ask students to choose the fact that is most interesting or surprising to them. Ask students to share the fact that stood out to them and why. Highlight that, while we may not see it all the time, our lives are full of objects that come from all over the world and most are made by other people before they get to us.

7. Tell students that it is important to protect nature for the animals and plants that live there, but it is also important to protect nature to keep humans healthy. Protecting wild places means that humans have clean air to breath and clean water to drink. Many people around the world depend on wild places in order to survive, so protecting nature protects people as well.

8. Finally, ask students to write a journal entry about one day in their life, pointing out all of the actions that they have learned impact other parts of the world. They can use the connectedness survey and fact sheet as sources for all of the ways their daily lives are impacted by people and places all over the globe.

9. Ask if any students would like to share a part of what they wrote and what it means about what they learned today.

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