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NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources are materials that come directly from nature and are used to produce goods and services. Examples include trees, water, soil, coal and fish.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Definition/Background

Natural resources, such as land, are “gifts from nature.” They are present without human intervention. All raw materials used in production originally come from natural resources. This sometimes creates confusion when classifying resources because raw materials are not necessarily natural resources. For example, lumber used to build a house is considered an intermediate good. Lumber is not a natural resource because it does not come directly from nature; trees have been altered by man to form lumber. Trees are a natural resource. Producers use natural resources, human resources, and capital goods to make goods and provide services.

Teaching Ideas

1. Have students write and illustrate a haiku, a poem having three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, about their favorite natural resource
Example: The sun shines each day
 It brings warmth, joy, light, and hope
 Plants grown in the sun
2. Call out the names of natural resources. Instruct the students to raise one hand if the natural resource is a plant, two hands if it is a mineral and to quickly stand up/sit down if it is an animal. (Typical list: tree, cow, gold, silver, corn, coal, chicken, sheep, wheat, goat).
3. Have the students write the lyrics to a song based on natural resources. Use a well known tune such as “Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush,” “The Farmer in the Dell” or “Row, Row, Row, Your Boat.”
4. Discuss what natural resources were needed to make today’s school lunch.
5. Assign each student a natural resource and have them write five facts and five opinions about it.

Lessons & Resources

Print Lessons

- Focus: Economics Grades K-2, Lesson 3:** Gifts from Mother Nature (elementary)
Master Curriculum Guides in Economics: K-2, Lesson 7: Gifts from Nature (elementary)
Spotting Economics: from Africa to Ice Cream, Lesson 2: When Benny Spends his Pennies (elementary)
Middle School World Geography: Focus on Economics, Lesson 1: What are Productive Resources? (middle)

Online Lessons

- The Giving Tree** (elementary)
http://www.ncee.net/resources/lessons/childrens_lit_sample.pdf
Water, Trees, Fish (elementary)
http://www.usmint.gov/kids/teachers/lessonPlans/50sq/2007/_k01-2.pdf
There is Something in the Water (middle)
<http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.cfm?lesson=EM308&page=teacher>

Fed Resources

- Lemonade For Sale** (elementary)
http://www.richmondfed.org/education/for_teachers/lesson_plans_and_classroom_activities/index.cfm
Tortilla Factory (elementary)
http://stlouisfed.org/education/lesson_plans/TortillaFactory.pdf

Literature

- **From Dawn Till Dusk** by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock. Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Natural resources are part of every season on a Vermont farm. [Grades 3-5]
- **The Just-Right, Perfect Present** by Frances Kennedy. Tricycle Press, 2007. A family reunion is taking place in the apple orchard where Grandpapa had planted the first tree on the day he and Grandmama were married 50 years ago. [Grades 2-5]
- **Hoot** by Carl Hiaasen. Random House, 2002. Natural resources and endangered species are the main concern of 12-year-old Roy and his new friends as they attempt to save both at a proposed construction site. [Grades 4-7]
- **Lemonade for Sale** by Stuart J. Murphy. Harper Collins Publisher, 1998. The Elm Street Kids’ Club decides to produce and sell lemonade so that they can earn enough money to fix up their clubhouse. [Grades 2-6]
- **The Tortilla Factory** by Gary Paulson. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998. This book tells the story of the life cycle of corn, from seed to plant to tortilla and back to seed again. [Grades K-2]

VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC EDUCATION

VCEE is a nonprofit organization providing Virginia’s K-12 teachers with professional development, quality curriculum and other resources to promote economic and financial education. Visit www.vcee.org or contact VCEE or one of its affiliated centers for economic education to learn about specific opportunities.

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For more resources on teaching economics and the Federal Reserve System go to www.richmondfed.org/educational_info. Among these free and easy to use resources you’ll find lesson plans, workshop information and publications.

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