DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Safeguarding Our Planet: Conservation and Stewardship



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Key Themes

- Conservation
- Stewardship

Core Values

- Community
- Liberty

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Define conservation.
- List two ways to protect the Earth.
- Describe the role John Muir played in conservation.
- Explain the relationship between President Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir.

Key Terms

- avalanche: a large amount of snow that quickly moves down a slope.
- 0 2 **conservation:** protecting our environment and the wildlife that lives in it.
- 0 3 **environment:** everything that is around us, which includes both living and nonliving things such as soil, water, animals, and plants.
- 0 4 **preserve:** to keep safe from harm or to protect.

Introduction

TELL Students

Let's go on an adventure! [Gather the class and take them outside, weather permitting, to explore. Reserve the playground or an area on your school property where students can freely look around and use their five senses to explore.] Today, we are going to use our five senses to explore.

ASK Students

What are our five senses? What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? How do you feel?

TELL Students

I see big, fluffy clouds. I hear birds chirping. I smell flowers. I see colorful plants. Our world is filled with so many beautiful sights! And guess what? We have a very important job.

ASK Students

What important job do you think I am talking about?

TELL Students

God made this wonderful world, and He wants us to look after it and all its treasures. Today we are going to learn ways to take care of God's creation, the Earth you live on. We are also going to learn about a man named John Muir who loved nature. [Reference John Muir Image.] People call him "The Father of Our National Parks" because he worked really hard to protect beautiful places for everyone to enjoy. He showed us that even if you are not a president or a mayor, you can still do important things to help the Earth.

ASK Students

Who is "The Father of Our National Parks?"

TELL Students

Yes, John Muir! John Muir loved nature and worked hard to protect it. He believed that every living thing, big or small, is special because God created it. John Muir's love for wild places helped make important changes in America, showing us that when you care about something, you can make a difference.

Introduction

ASK Students

What are some ways that you can make a difference in our classroom?

TELL Students

That is right! By taking care of your things, respecting others and helping your friends, you make a difference every day. Today, we are going to learn about the important changes John Muir helped make in America. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more!

WATCH O

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 34: National Parks





TELL Students @ P

John Muir was born a long time ago, in 1838, in a place called Dunbar in Scotland. Even when he was a little boy, he loved being outdoors. [Reference Young John Muir.] He used to go on exciting walks in the countryside with his grandpa. In 1849, John's family moved to Wisconsin. When John was not helping on the farm, he and his younger brother would go on adventures, exploring the fields and forests around their home. He enjoyed learning about the environment. The **environment** is everything that is around us, which includes both living and nonliving things such as soil, water, animals, and plants.

ASK Students

Do you like to explore? What are some things you like to do outside?

TELL Students

John Muir loved to explore the outdoors but he also loved reading. He was pretty good at making things too. [Reference John Muir.] Once, he made a special bed that would make sure you got up early by tipping you out of it! In 1860, he went to the University of Wisconsin because he wanted to learn more about plants, animals, and rocks. But John felt that nature was the best place to learn, so he left school in 1863 to learn through exploration.

ASK Students

How did reading help John Muir improve his exploring skills?

TELL Students

That is right! Reading helps everyone learn more and become better at what they do. John went on a big adventure, walking through different states and even Canada. He did many different jobs to earn money. [Reference John Muir's Journey Image.] One day, while working in a shop, John got hurt and could not see for a whole month. When he got his eyesight back, he wanted to see every beautiful place he could. And that is just what he did!

ASK Students

How do you think John felt when he lost his eyesight? How do you think he felt when he regained his eyesight?

TELL Students

John decided to travel to Cuba, Panama, and then all the way to San Francisco in California. When he got there, he asked someone how to get away from the busy city. [Reference Busy City Image.] He wanted to find somewhere wild to explore. That person asked him, "Where do you want to go?" And John said, "Anywhere that is wild." So, he walked through valleys until he found a beautiful place called Yosemite in the mountains of California. [Reference Yosemite Image.] He thought it was the most beautiful place with bright, shining mountains. John Muir loved it so much he called it his home and said it was like a place full of light.

ASK Students

How would you describe our town? Do we live in a busy city, in the mountains, by a desert, or by the beach?

TELL Students

In November 1869, John Muir made a special house for himself next to Yosemite Creek. He helped a hotel owner by making a sawmill, leading guests on fun walks, and chopping down trees for the hotel to use. His cozy house was made of pine and cedar wood. Imagine a house where a little creek flows right under the floor and plants grow inside! John even had a special writing desk with ferns growing around it and slept on soft cedar branches with sheepskin blankets.

[Reference Muir Home Image.]

ASK Students

Do you have plants in your home? Do we have plants in our classroom?

TELL Students @ ^

John also built a special study spot high up in the sawmill that he could only get to by climbing a ladder. He called it his "hang-nest." [Reference Hang-Nest Image.] In Yosemite, John felt very happy and peaceful. He wrote to his friend that it was like feasting in a beautiful mountain house made by God. John did not just enjoy the beauty of Yosemite; he learned a lot from it too. He collected plants, wrote about them in his journals, and studied the rocks, plants, and animals he found. John had some exciting adventures in Yosemite, like getting wet from waterfalls, exploring glaciers with a rope, and even sliding down a canyon with an avalanche!

TELL Students (continued)

An avalanche is a large amount of snow that quickly moves down a slope.

ASK Students

What did John do to learn about nature?

TELL Students

John Muir wrote a lot of stories and books—more than 300 stories and 10 books! He wrote about all the wonderful things he saw and did in nature. He wanted everyone, from presidents to kids who love adventures, to know how peaceful and happy nature can make us feel.

ASK Students

How do you feel when you are outside playing?

TELL Students

John Muir said that many people who were very busy and tired were starting to see how important it was to go to the mountains because it felt like going home. He thought that wild places were not just useful for things like wood or water but were important for making us feel alive and happy. [Reference People Enjoying the Outdoors.] In our Star-Spangled Adventures episode, you saw President Theodore Roosevelt. He read John Muir's book and thought it was really important. Even though some people told him that America's wild places were too big to ever run out, Roosevelt started to worry about conserving America's natural resources. He wondered what would happen if all the trees were cut down and if we used up all our oil and coal. So, in 1903, he wrote a letter to John Muir saying he wanted to go camping with him in Yosemite to learn more about nature.

ASK Students

How would you feel if the President of the United States wanted to go camping with you? Have you ever been camping?

TELL Students

John Muir was excited to show the president the beauty and importance of nature.

TELL Students (continued)

They went on a special camping trip where they slept under giant trees and saw a lot of snow. John told President Roosevelt about the big trees, animals, and why we need to preserve places like Yosemite. Preserve means to keep safe from harm or to protect. [Reference Muir and Roosevelt Camping Image.] After their talks, President Roosevelt worked hard to protect a lot of nature in America. He helped save Yosemite Valley and the big trees there by making a new law. He said, "Yosemite and the giant trees are some of the most beautiful things in the world, and we need to make sure they are kept safe forever." Today, we call this conservation. Conservation means protecting our environment and the wildlife that lives in it.

ASK Students

What did President Roosevelt do to preserve Yosemite?

TELL Students

Because of this camping trip and their talks, President Roosevelt helped protect a lot of land for parks and forests so that everyone, even kids and grandkids in the future, could enjoy them. He made new parks, saved land, and made sure there were places for birds and animals to live safely. So, next time you visit a park or see a big tree, remember to think of John Muir and President Roosevelt. They worked very hard so we could all enjoy the beautiful nature around us.

ASK Students

What are some ways that you can take care of the beautiful Earth we live on?

TELL Students

That is right! By taking care of your things, putting your trash in trash cans, recycling, and planting flowers, you can help take care of the Earth that God created.



Teacher Overview

This is an interactive, role-playing game designed for kids to explore the concept of conservation and learn about the contributions of John Muir to environmental preservation. This activity can be played in the classroom or at home, using simple materials and some imagination.

Materials Needed

- Printable character cards of John Muir and other historical figures like Theodore Roosevelt.
- Printable badges of animals, trees, and natural landmarks that John Muir helped to preserve.
- A map of the United States with key locations (like Yosemite, the Sierra Nevada, and others) marked.
- Simple props to represent camping gear (e.g., backpacks, a toy compass).
- Printed facts about John Muir's life, conservation efforts, and the national parks he influenced.
- "Conservation Challenge" cards with tasks or questions related to conservation.

Setup

- 1. Prepare the Space: Arrange the classroom or play area to resemble different natural settings that John Muir explored or helped conserve. Each station represents a location like Yosemite National Park, the Sierra Nevada mountains, etc.
- 2. Character Cards: Distribute character cards to participants. Some will be John Muir, and others can be animals, trees, or even President Theodore Roosevelt.
- 3. Map and Journey Path: Display the map with marked locations. Kids will navigate from station to station, completing tasks to collect badges.

How to Play

- 1. Introduction Story: Begin by reviewing today's lesson on John Muir, highlighting his love for nature and his role in the conservation movement.
- 2. Journey Begins: Kids start their journey at the first station with a character card and a backpack. At each station, they face a "Conservation Challenge" related to the location. Challenges can range from answering trivia questions, participating in a cleanup activity, or making a pledge to protect nature.
- 3. Collecting Badges: Upon completing each challenge, participants earn a badge related to the station (e.g., a sequoia tree badge for the Sierra Nevada station).





How to Play (continued)

- 4. Camping with Roosevelt: One special station can involve a simulated camping trip with John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt where kids discuss how to protect nature, mimicking the historic camping trip that influenced the establishment of national parks.
- 5. Conservation Pledges: At the final station, participants use what they have learned to create a personal conservation pledge, promising to take specific actions to help protect the environment.

Conclusion

- Reflection Circle: Gather all participants to share their pledges and discuss what they learned about John Muir, conservation, and the importance of protecting natural spaces.
- Award Ceremony: Present each child with a "Junior Conservationist" certificate and celebrate with naturethemed snacks.

Matching Activity

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NAME:	DATE:
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Instructions: Match the words with their pictures.

Bug

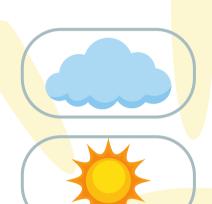
Sun

Flower

Tree

Cloud

Bird









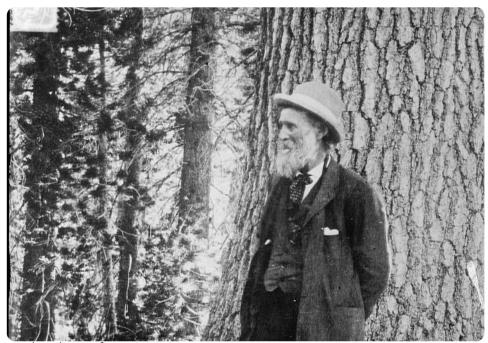




Resources

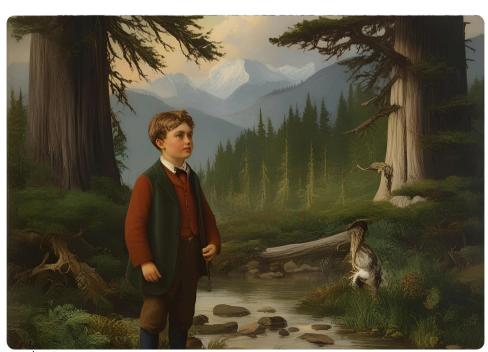
- https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/about/default.aspx
- https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/mans_place_in_the_universe.aspx
- https://www.nps.gov/jomu/learn/historyculture/people.htm
- https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx
- https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/john-muirs-yosemite-10737/
- Ibid.
- https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/muir.htm
- https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/favorite_quotations.aspx
- https://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2016/08/roosevelt-muir-and-the-camping-trip/
- https://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/historyculture/theodore-roosevelt-and-conservation.htm
- https://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2016/08/roosevelt-muir-and-the-camping-trip/
- https://www.nps.gov/jomu/learn/historyculture/people.htm

John Muir



Credit: Library of Congress.

Young John Muir



Credit: Canva Pro.

John Muir's Journey



Credit: JMT Wilderness Conservatory.

Busy City



Credit: Canva Pro.

Yosemite



Credit: Canva Pro

Muir Home



Credit: National Park Service

Hang-Nest



Credit: Canva Pro.

People Enjoying the Outdoors



Credit: Canva Pro

Muir and Roosevelt Camping



Credit: National Park Service.

Notes
