

# DISCOVER AMERICA

## Teacher Guide



## Safeguarding Our Planet: Conservation and Stewardship

# Table of **Contents**

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3	Themes & Values
	Learning Objectives
4	Key Terms
5	Introduction
7	Lesson
11	Activity: Eco-Explorers
13	Assessment: Stewardship Sentences
15	Resources
16	Images
21	Notes





## Key Themes

- Conservation
- Stewardship

## Core Values

- Community
- Liberty

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

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

# Key Terms

- 0 1 **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.
- 0 5 **stewardship:** how we take care of everything God has given to us.

# 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.] Let's use our five senses to explore.

**ASK** Students

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 a lot. **[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 all his life 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 a lot 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** ●

[Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 34: National Parks](#)



# Lesson

## TELL Students

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 Image.]** 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. An **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 Image.]** 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?

# Lesson

## 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? How would you describe your environment?

## 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 nature 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! An **avalanche** is a large amount of snow that quickly moves down a slope.

# Lesson

## **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 Image.]** In our Star Spangled Adventures episode, you learned about 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 worried about 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. They went on a special camping trip where they slept under giant trees and experienced a lot of snow. John told President Roosevelt about the big trees, animals, and why we need to preserve places like Yosemite.

# Lesson

## TELL Students (continued)

**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? What does conservation mean?

## TELL Students

Because of their 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. Taking care of the things God has given to you is called **stewardship**. It means taking care of Earth and everything on it—like the trees, animals, oceans, and even the air we breathe. **[Reference People Caring for Earth Image.]** We have the job of protecting our world so it stays beautiful and healthy. Being a good steward means recycling, saving water by turning off the tap, and being kind to all living things. When we act as stewards, we help make sure our planet is a wonderful place to live, not just for us, but for all creatures and for kids in the future too!



# Eco-Explorers: The Adventures of John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Stewardship

## Objective

To educate third-graders about the significance of John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt in the history of environmental conservation, and to instill the principles of stewardship by engaging students in interactive learning and creative expression.

## Materials

- Biographies of John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt (simplified for third grade level)
- World map or globe
- Art supplies (construction paper, markers, glue, scissors, magazines for cutting)
- "Eco-Explorer Kit" for each group (recyclable materials, seeds for planting, small containers, water)

## Discovery Time

- Start by reviewing today's lesson, focusing on John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt's contributions to conservation and the establishment of national parks.
- Discuss with the students what stewardship means and how these two figures exemplified it by protecting the natural world.

## Map Exploration

- Use a world map or globe to locate places important to Muir and Roosevelt, like Yosemite National Park and the national parks Roosevelt established. This visual aid helps children understand the geographical impact of conservation efforts.

## Art Project - My Dream Park

- Divide the students into small groups and provide them with art supplies.
- Assign each group to design "My Dream Park," encouraging them to incorporate elements they learned from Muir and Roosevelt's conservation efforts, such as forests, animals, and hiking trails.
- Have students present their parks to the class, explaining how they would protect and preserve their park as stewards of the environment.



# Eco-Explorers: The Adventures of John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Stewardship

## Eco-Explorer Kit Activity

- Give each group an "Eco-Explorer Kit." Challenge them to use the recyclable materials to create something useful for their classroom or homes, such as a bird feeder or a plant pot.
- Plant seeds in small containers as a symbol of growing their commitment to stewardship. Discuss how taking care of a plant is similar to taking care of the planet.

## Stewardship Pledge

- Conclude the activity by having each student create a "Stewardship Pledge," where they write down one or two simple actions they promise to take to protect the environment, inspired by Muir and Roosevelt's legacy.
- Create a "Pledge Wall" in the classroom where all pledges are displayed as a daily reminder of their commitment.

## Conclusion

This activity combines historical education with practical stewardship lessons, allowing students to connect past conservation efforts with present-day actions they can take to protect the environment. Through creative and hands-on activities, students will leave with a deeper understanding of the importance of caring for our planet and the role they can play as stewards of the environment.



# Stewardship Sentences

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## Objective

This activity is designed to help third-graders understand the concept of stewardship through the story of John Muir and the importance of caring for our environment. Students will practice creating sentences that reflect stewardship actions inspired by Muir's dedication to conservation.

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## Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils for each student
- A list of stewardship actions (e.g., recycling, saving water, planting trees)

## Discussing Stewardship

- Review the term "stewardship" with the class. Explain that stewardship means taking care of something we value. In the case of John Muir, it was the natural world.

## Introduction to the Activity

- Explain to the students that they will be creating their own stewardship sentences. These sentences should reflect actions that show care for the environment, inspired by John Muir's example

## Creating Stewardship Sentences

- Give each student paper and a pencil. Display the list of stewardship actions to help inspire their sentences.
- Ask students to write down five sentences, each one describing a different way to take care of the Earth. You may provide a sentence starter, such as "I can take care of the Earth by \_\_\_\_."

## Examples of Stewardship Sentences

- "I can take care of the Earth by recycling plastic bottles and paper."
- "I can save water by turning off the tap when I brush my teeth."
- "I can be a friend to the planet by planting a tree in my backyard."



# Stewardship Sentences

## Sharing and Reflecting

- Invite students to share their sentences with the class. This can be done by having a few volunteers read their sentences aloud or by pairing students to share with each other.
- Conclude with a class discussion on how each action, no matter how small, contributes to the larger effort of taking care of our planet.
- Wrap up by reinforcing the idea that everyone, just like John Muir, has the power to make a difference in protecting and caring for our environment. Celebrate the students' creativity and commitment to being stewards of the Earth.

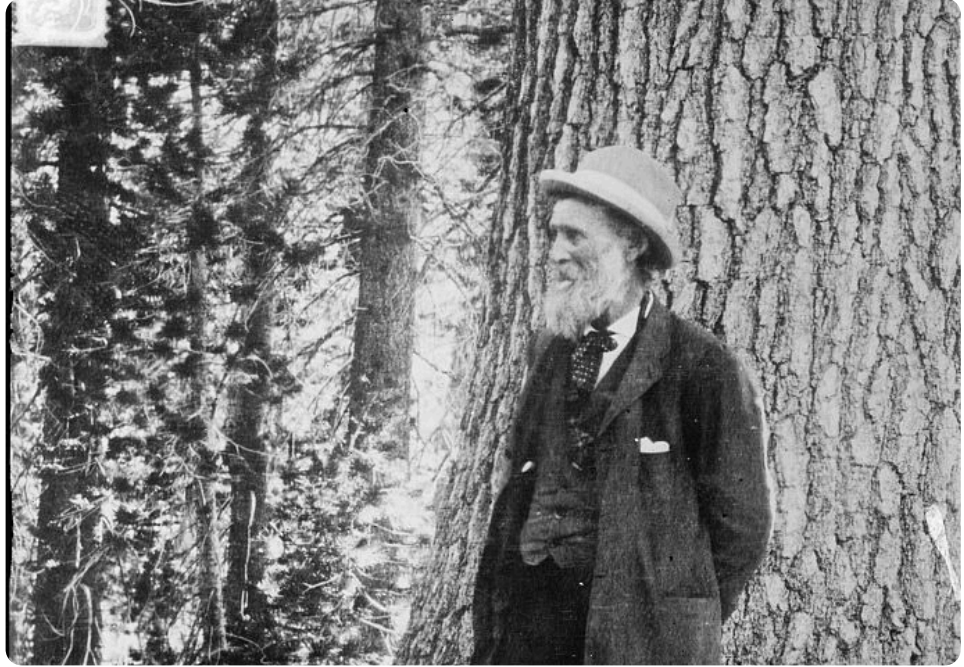


# Resources

- [https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/about/default.aspx](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://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://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx)
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/john-muir-yosemite-10737/>
- Ibid.
- <https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/muir.htm>
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- [https://blogs.loc.gov/inside\\_adams/2016/08/roosevelt-muir-and-the-camping-trip/](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://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2016/08/roosevelt-muir-and-the-camping-trip/)
- <https://www.nps.gov/jomu/learn/historyculture/people.htm>

# Images

**John Muir**



Credit: Library of Congress.

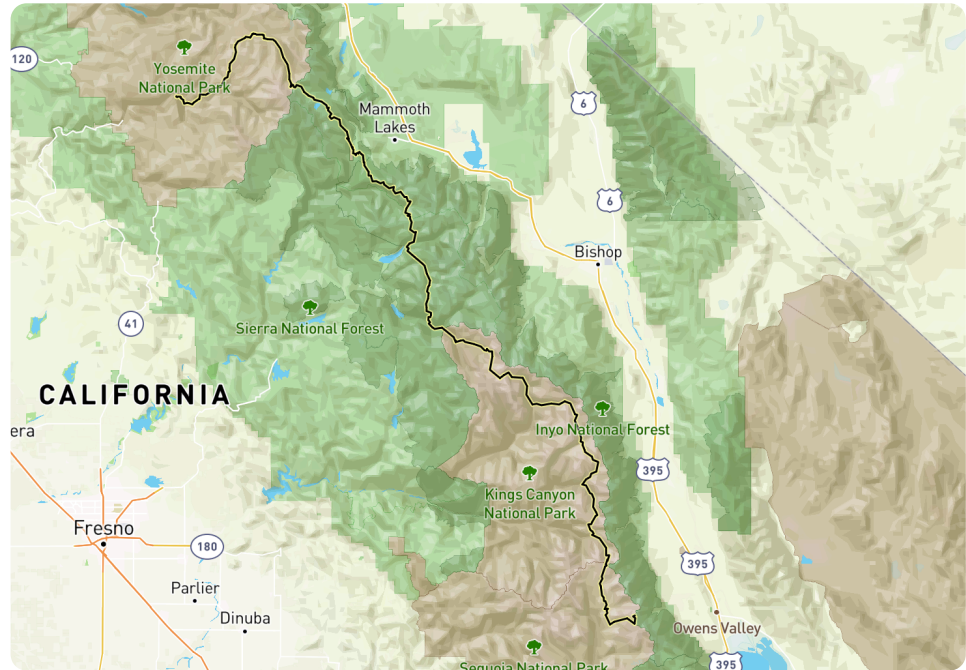
**Young John  
Muir**



Credit: Canva Pro.

# Images

## John Muir's Journey



Credit: JMT Wilderness Conservatory.

## Busy City



Credit: Canva Pro.

# Images

## Yosemite



Credit: Canva Pro

## Muir Home



Credit: National Park Service

# Images

**Hang-Nest**



Credit: Canva Pro.

**People  
Enjoying the  
Outdoors**



Credit: Canva Pro

# Images

## **Muir and Roosevelt Camping**



Credit: National Park Service.

## **People Caring for Earth**



Credit: Canva Pro

PAGE 21