

World Wide Waldens

Putting Thoreau's Words into Action

An environmental ethics and action program that connects youth around the world



Environmental Ethics Activity Guide



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About This Guide

The *World Wide Waldens* Environmental Ethics Activities Guide provides a collection of activities to help you and your students explore environmental ethics.

Use these activities to:

- Engage students in fun, meaningful and thought-provoking discussions on environmental topics and challenges.
- Encourage students to think globally about environmental issues.
- Help students articulate their own environmental ethic and explore the development of their thinking.
- Provide students with meaningful reflection activities that compliment environmental or service learning projects

You can tailor the activities in the guide to fit your needs, interests, and schedule. Pick and choose, or do them all. They are geared toward high school/secondary level students; however, middle school and college students have also used and loved them.

Look for supporting materials and other resources on the *World Wide Waldens* website:
www.worldwidewaldens.org

Get Involved with World Wide Waldens

World Wide Waldens helps young people reflect on their environmental ethic - where it came from and where it's going - so that they can develop an ethical compass that will help them navigate environmental issues and decisions for a life to come.

We work with teachers and students, ages 13-24, from all over the world, in any educational setting—formal or informal, individual or group settings.

There are many ways you can participate in *World Wide Waldens*:





- Use the activities in this guide to help students explore their environmental ethic.
- Explore the *World Wide Waldens* website for additional resources, including the Walden Story, a website scavenger hunt, biographical information about Henry David Thoreau (Meet Thoreau) and much more.
- Engage your students in an environmental action project, using our online resources to guide the process.
- Share student work and achievements by having them post their environmental action project online in the *World Wide Waldens* **Project Showcase**.
- Have students reflect on their own environmental ethic by participating in the annual ***Live Deliberately* Essay Contest**.
- Nominate outstanding student environmental leaders for the **Walden Youth Leadership Summit**, held each year in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

World Wide Waldens is an educational program of the Walden Woods Project/Thoreau Institute. For more information about how to participate, visit www.worldwidewaldens.org.

Activities at a Glance

This guide includes eleven activities. Some are designed to introduce students to the concept of an “environmental ethic” and how people navigate environmental choices and challenges. Other activities help students reflect on their own emerging ethic and let them put that ethic into words – and into practice.

The activities do not need to be done sequentially. Use this ‘at a glance’ summary to help you decide which activities and sequence will work best for you.

1	Where’s Your Walden? 	Learn what a “Walden” is, why it matters, and share the Waldens in your life. Learn about the <i>Walden Story</i> on our website. Includes a Thoreau reading and discussion prompts: “In such a day” (Walden)
2	Green Life Snapshots 	Learn the term “environmental ethic” and identify experiences that shaped your ethic. Visit <i>Meet Henry</i> in the website Activities area to learn about the seeds of Thoreau’s ethic.
3	Reflection Circles	Find a spot in nature, observe, reflect, and journal – one time or many.
4	In the Words of Others	Immerse yourself in statements from artists, scientists, philosophers, and others to identify elements of their environmental ethic and which resonate with you.
5	Green Leaders & Legacies 	Meet people around the world who “walk the talk” and think about the people who have most influenced your country or culture’s environmental values. Find Q&As with inspiring environmental activists on our website.
6	Through the Eyes of Artists	Look at and listen to work from selected artists and explore the relationship between their environmental ethic and their work and the relationship between art and nature.
7	An Experiment in Living Simply 	Explore what it means to live simply for a few days. Visit the website to learn about Thoreau’s “experiment” by Walden Pond. Includes two Thoreau readings with discussion prompts: “Where I lived and what I lived for” and “I left the woods” (Walden)
8	Take a Stand	Clarify your environmental ethic by considering where you stand on a range of environmental values statements - and move around the room to show your stance.
9	Transcending Boundaries	Explore the interconnectedness of people and nature and the challenge of navigating choices that affect both.
10	The Same Sun	Explore similarities and differences in how students in other parts of the world think about the environment. Includes a Thoreau reading and discussion prompts: “Economy” (Walden)
11	What’s Your Ethic?	Capture your own environmental ethic in a personal credo, mission statement, letter to Thoreau, video clip, or other creative outlet.

 Indicates that the activity is supported by materials on our website.

Activity 1: Where's Your Walden?


Goal

Learn what a "Walden" is, why it matters, and share places that hold special meaning for you.


Time

1 hour

Materials

- *The Walden Story* 
- Regional or country map and pins OR online mapping tool like National Geographic Map Machine or Google Earth
- *Thoreau Reading: "In Such a Day"*

Find More on the Website

- *Meet Henry* (found under the Activities tab on the website) 

Before You Start

Decide how you will locate your group's Waldens on a map. Do members of your group come from places far and wide? Have they traveled widely? You may need a country or international map. Otherwise, a local or regional map should work. You can also use an online mapping tool.

Remember, Google Earth must be installed on your computer beforehand (3-5 minutes) while Google Maps can be used directly from the web without installation.

Instructions

1. Learn the Walden story by taking the online story tour on the *World Wide Waldens* website. Why is Walden Pond such an important environmental symbol? What did this area represent to Henry David Thoreau? To Don Henley and others who helped protect it hundreds of years later?
2. For Thoreau, Walden Pond was a special place that he loved and knew intimately. Do you have a natural place that holds special meaning for you? Where is it and why does it matter to you? Using a map and pins or web-based map, show where your group's special places are located.
3. Walden Pond found a group of people who could give it care and protection – people who could "steward" it. Do your special places need protection? How would you feel if one of your favorite places were threatened? If not the special places that you shared earlier, are there other natural places in your community that need care and protection – other "Waldens"?
4. Discuss the concept and challenges of "stewardship." Have you heard this term? What does it mean to steward the places we care about or need? How did Don Henley take action to protect Walden Woods? How could you take action to protect the "Waldens" that you care about?
5. Later, in a quiet moment, read the passage "In Such a Day" from Thoreau's book *Walden* (see handout) to see how Walden Pond served as a mirror for Thoreau to return to again and again.

Activity 1 Handout

Thoreau Reading

"In such a day, in September or October, Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set round with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; —a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush,—this the light-dust cloth,—which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still.

A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above. It is intermediate in its nature between land and sky. On land only the grass and trees wave, but the water itself is rippled by the wind. I see where the breeze dashes across it by the streaks or flakes of light. It is remarkable that we can look down on its surface. We shall, perhaps, look down thus on the surface of air at length, and mark where a still subtler spirit sweeps over it....

....It struck me again tonight, as if I had not seen it almost daily for more than twenty years — Why, here is Walden, the same woodland lake that I discovered so many years ago; where a forest was cut down last winter another is springing up by its shore as lustily as ever; the same thought is welling up to its surface that was then; it is the same liquid joy and happiness to itself and its Maker, ay, and it may be to me."

From *Walden* Chapter 9 - "The Ponds"

For Discussion and Journaling:

- Thoreau refers to Walden Pond as a mirror. In what ways does it and nature, in general, serve as a mirror?
- Thoreau's skills as a writer are clearly at work in this passage. How does art – writing, stories, music, painting, etc. – help conserve nature? Do you think Walden Woods would still exist today if Thoreau hadn't written about it so eloquently?
- Walden was well-known to Thoreau. He grew up nearby and spent many hours walking there. Why is it significant that he finds "liquid joy" in a place so close to home?
- Do you have a place, outside in nature, which serves as your "mirror" or brings you joy? How has this place influenced your view of the environment and your environmental ethic?
- How much time do you spend outside experiencing nature? Is this important to you?

Activity 2: Green Life Snapshots

Goal

Learn the term environmental ethic and reflect on experiences or moments that have shaped your environmental ethic.


Time

30-45 minutes

Materials

- Blank pieces of paper
- Pencils, colored pencils or crayons

Find More on the Website

- *Meet Henry* (found under the Activities tab on the website) 

Before You Start

You can do this activity inside or, even better, outdoors. If outside, send group members off to sit quietly by themselves for 10 minutes to sketch, and then bring everyone back together to discuss snapshot drawings.

Instructions

1. Our ethics are the values and principles that guide our choices and actions. An environmental ethic includes those values and principles that shape our relationship with the natural world and inform decisions we make about how we will interact with nature and use Earth's resources.

When it comes to the environment, what do you believe and value – and what experiences have shaped or transformed your views?

Fold a blank piece of paper in half twice so that you have four square/rectangular areas. Label each one: First Memory, Early Childhood, Teen Years, and Future.



2. Next, draw a picture in each box – a “snapshot” – that shows an important memory, experience or moment in your environmental autobiography. For the Future box, draw a snapshot that shows how you hope to live or act at some point in the future. Don't worry about artistic skill. Stick figures are fine!
3. Once everyone finishes, show your snapshots to each other. How did these experiences shape the way you think about and interact with the environment? How many people had similar experiences? What are the differences?

Extension Activity

- Introduce your group to Henry David Thoreau by creating a *Green Life Snapshots* picture for him. Visit the *Meet Henry* area of the website (Activities tab) and see if you can identify key “moments” in his childhood, teen years, and adulthood that shaped his ethic and perspective on nature.

Activity 3: Reflection Circles

Goal

Observe nature closely to connect to place and create space for reflection.

Time

20-30 minutes per journaling session (number of sessions is flexible, recommend doing at least 3)

Materials

- 1 Piece of string (approx. 1 meter long) per person
- Journal and pen or pencil

Before You Start

Make sure the group knows it will be going outside and sitting on the ground for this activity. Everyone should dress appropriately.

Thoreau observed the world closely, recording his observations in his journal. But his journal was not simply a record of his observations, nor was it an intimate diary revealing his innermost-self. Rather, in it he described what he saw, and then reflected on his observations. The reflections often emerged a day or two after the initial observations. He wrote in 1857, *"I would fain make two reports in my Journal, first the incidents and observations of to-day; and by to-morrow I review the same and record what was omitted before, which will often be the most significant and poetic part. I do not know at first what it is that charms me. The men and things of to-day are wont to lie fairer and truer in to-morrow's memory."*

Instructions

1. Take one piece of string per person and tie the ends together to form a large loop.
2. Select a quiet spot in nature where you can sit alone and observe. Secure the string to the ground in a circle to delineate a small section of nature. You will return to this location each time you do the *Reflection Circles* journaling exercise.
3. For each journaling session, spend at least 20 minutes at your spot, observing closely. In your journal, record what you observe and reflect. What do you notice about your spot in nature? What do you notice about yourself? Do your observations of nature and self lead you to any broader observations about people, society, and the environment? How do your observations and reflections develop or change over time?

Activity 4: In the Words of Others

Goal

Analyze statements from artists, scientists, philosophers, and others to identify the core elements of their environmental ethics.


Time

30-45 min

Materials

- *In the Words of Others* handout

Find More on the Website

- *People who Walk the Talk* (found under the Activities tab on the website) 

Instructions

1. Read through the collection of statements on the *In the Words of Others* handout. They represent reflections of a variety of people from different backgrounds and places around the world.
2. Consider which statements most closely reflect your own feelings or thinking about the human-environment relationship. Which resonate with you and which do not?
3. Discuss your reactions to the statements with your group, or respond to the different statements in a journal entry.

You may want to consider the following as you read and discuss these statements:

- What do you agree with?
- What do you disagree with?
- How does the person portray:
 - Human use of the land
 - The value of nature
 - Land ownership
 - Responsibility to other species
 - Responsibility to future generations
 - Responsibility for caring for the environment
 - Rights associated with nature – who has rights and who does not, what are those rights
 - The relationship between economic development and the environment
- How is the person's thinking reflected in practices in your country? Around the world?

Extension Activities

- Select a particular perspective and defend it in a debate format, supporting your arguments with your own research and clear articulation of the consequences of your position and alternative positions. Alternatively, write a one-page position paper arguing for that particular perspective.

Activity 4 Handout

In the Words of Others

"The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land... A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." – Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

"We need to promote development that does not destroy our environment." - Wangari Maathai, Kenyan Activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner

"The important principle is that resources and environments serve economic functions and have positive value. To treat them as if they had zero value is seriously to risk overusing the resource...the important principle to establish is that in our economic accounting, in the weighing up of the pros and cons of capital investments and economic policies, we should try, as best we can, to record the economic values that natural environments provide." - Pearce, Markandya and Barber, *Blueprint for a Green Economy*

"The universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefit of all creation. Each individual life form must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by farming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not any one species encroach upon others rights." – from *Ishopanishad* (one of the philosophical texts of Hinduism)

"All sentient beings, including the small insects, cherish themselves. All have the right to overcome suffering and achieve happiness. I therefore pray that we show love and compassion to all." – His Holiness the Dalai Lama

"How can you buy or sell the sky – the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us... Every part of this earth is sacred to us." – Chief Seattle, Native American Indian leader

"The first principle of conservation is development, the use of the natural resources now existing on this continent for the benefit of people who live here and now...In the second place, conservation stands for the prevention of waste...there is a third principle... Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time." - Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation*

"The idea that we are "stewards of the earth" is another symptom of human arrogance. Imagine yourself with the task of overseeing your body's physical processes. Do you understand the way it works well enough to keep all its systems in operation? Can you make your kidneys function? Can you control the removal of waste? Are you conscious of the blood flow through your arteries, or the fact that you are losing a hundred thousand skin cells a minute? We are unconscious of most of our body's processes, thank goodness, because we'd screw it up if we weren't... The idea that we are consciously care-taking such a large and mysterious system is ludicrous." -Lynn Margulis, Biologist

"I lived near Leeds and worked from the age of 13 on a farm right where the suburbs began — and that was very important. I was always going to be an artist, since I was a kid, but the impact that farming had was tremendous. It's a very sculptural activity. Not just dry stone walls but stacking bales — big minimalist sculptures, beautiful and enormous. Plowing a field is drawing

lines on the land, painting the fields — it's incredibly visual. And the dead animals. When you're a farm kid you see death all the time... It's such an important part of the landscape; it's green and verdant because of it." – Andy Goldsworthy, Artist

"[Howard Odum] suggested that we needed to somehow decode the language of nature - how does the coral reef work, how does it sustain life, same with the forest, the prairie, etc. I would characterize my life as one of the first people to attempt to decode the language of nature and use it as a blueprint to design the infrastructure for human society." – John Todd, Biologist and leader in the field of Ecological Design

"Spirituality is the natural response to the totality of nature, of which we're a part. For me, it is a felt relationship to nature, of which I recognize myself as a micro part of a macro whole." – Emmett Gowin, Photographer

"I'm a great believer that [doing] something is greater than [doing] nothing, and it's difficult once you find out information about the consequences of the fashion industry to turn a blind eye... One of my biggest passions on this side of my collection is that 'eco' shouldn't be a word that immediately conjures up images of oatmeal-coloured garments or garments that are oversized or lacking in any sort of luxury or beauty or detailing or desirability... there should be no compromises from the design point-of-view. Your products should not be compromised in any way just because they're environmentally friendly." – Stella McCartney, Fashion Designer

"A culture that marginalizes the environment marginalizes people... As soon as you discount, ignore, or diminish life, you sow the seeds of economic dysfunction where income is polarized, assets are concentrated, and losers far outnumber winners, among whom are people, plants, places, and creatures...The question is: how did we create an economic system that tells us it is cheaper to destroy the earth and waste certain people than to honor both. Because those are the economic signals we act on every day, unconsciously or not. How did we become the only species without full employment?...Can we design an economic system that offers abundant employment of family wage jobs? Easily. But that would require a country that wanted justice and fairness, where people would sacrifice their unending desires for the true needs of the whole." – Paul Hawken, Entrepreneur, Author, Environmentalist

"I don't think the environmental movement is about telling people how to live because not everyone can put solar panels on their house. It's just not a reality. But it is about just being aware of these global forces out there and being aware in the next election. Asking the right questions about what the next candidate's environmental policy is. Of course personal action is very important, but until the powers that be truly infuse this into our daily way of living, I don't think anything's really going to change on a massive level." - Leonardo DiCaprio, Actor

"What are the natural features which make a township handsome? A river, with its waterfalls and meadows, a lake, a hill, a cliff or individual rocks, a forest, and ancient trees standing singly. Such things are beautiful; they have a high use which dollars and cents never represent. If the inhabitants of a town were wise, they would seek to preserve these things, though at a considerable expense; for such things educate far more than any hired teachers or preachers, or any at present recognized system of school education. I do not think him fit to be the founder of a state or even of a town who does not foresee the use of these things, but legislates chiefly for oxen, as it were." – Henry David Thoreau, Author and Naturalist

Activity 5: Green Leaders & Legacies




Goal

Meet environmental activists around the world who “walk the talk.” Think about leaders and other influences that play a role in how your community, culture, or country views the environment.



Time

Introduction: 15 minutes
Research: 30 minutes
Sharing: 30-45 minutes
Discussion: 45-60 minutes

Materials

- *Environmental Leader Web Resources*  
- *People who Walk the Talk* (found under the Activities tab on the website) 

Find More on the Website

- *Project Showcase* 
- *Walden Youth Leadership Summit* 

Instructions

1. Visit the *People who Walk the Talk* area of the *World Wide Waldens* site to read about people who are living their environmental ethics. What are important elements of their environmental ethics? What are they challenging us to think about or do?
2. Brainstorm a list of environmental heroes you may already know – people from anywhere in the world, living or historical, whose environmental ethic and leadership stand out. Who is on your list and why? Have any of them influenced you directly? How?
3. Pick an interesting or influential environmental activist and learn more about him or her. Use the web resources listed on the *Environmental Leaders Web Resources* *handout* to help you. Share what you discover with your group. Who are they, where do they live, and what have they done? What is their message?
4. With the group, think about the role that culture and geography play in shaping people’s environmental ethics.

As you discuss this, consider the following:

- How has your cultural background and the place you live influenced how you value and relate to the environment?
- What are some of the reasons other people might have a very different relationship to nature than you?
- What environmental themes, stories, or messages are woven into the fabric of the culture(s) that most influence you? Who are some of the important environmental advocates, voices, or thinkers in your culture or area?
- “Culture” can have both positive and negative influences on your environmental ethic. Can you think of examples?

Activity 5 Handout

Environmental Leader Web Resources

The Goldman Environmental Prize

<http://www.goldmanprize.org>

Brower Youth Awards

<http://www.broweryouthawards.org>

The Guardian: 50 People Who Could Save the Planet

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jan/05/activists.ethicalliving>

National Geographic Explorers

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/field/grants-programs/emerging-explorers/>

Newsweek: The Century's Environmental Leaders

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/130264>

Ramon Magsaysay Award Winners

<http://www.rmaf.org.ph>

Ecotopia: Ecology Hall of Fame

<http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/>

Green Muesum.org profiles of ecological artists

<http://www.greenmuseum.org/c/aen/Issues/introb.php>

Activity 6: Through the Eyes of Artists

Goal

Look at and listen to the work of selected artists to understand how they and you relate to the environment.

Time

1 hour

Materials

- *Through the Eyes of Artists Web Resources* handout

Before You Start

This activity can be done individually, in small groups, or as a full class. If doing it as a group, make sure you have the ability to project the artwork (visual and audio) so that everyone can see and hear it. If breaking the group into small groups, you may want to have each small group view/listen to the work of different of artists.

Instructions

1. Using the *Through the Eyes of Artists* resource list (handout), explore the work of artists and musicians who have addressed ecological themes through their work. Keep track of which artwork you look at or listen to and how you respond to the work when you see or hear it.

For each artist that you explore, think about (and take notes on) the following:

- What is the artist's name and nationality?
 - What media does the artist use?
 - What is the purpose behind his/her work?
 - Does the artist convey his/her personal environmental ethic through the work? If so, how? What words could you use to capture that ethic?
 - How does the work engage people?
 - Does the work resonate with you, surprise you, upset you? How does it make you feel?
 - Did you learn anything from the artist's work? Did it change the way you see or understand the human-nature relationship?
 - What do your reactions to the art tell you about how you relate to the environment or about your environmental ethic?
2. Discuss your responses with others in your group, either in groups of 2-3, your small group, or with the whole group together. What role does art play in framing our thinking about our relationship with nature?

Activity 6 Handout

"Through the Eyes of Artists" Web Resources

ALyosha, singer and songwriter

- ALyosha Mission: <http://alyoshamission.com/mission/>
- "Sweet People" performance (video): <http://alyoshamission.com/publications/?id=43>

Eve Mosher, conceptual artist

- High Water Line: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/16/arts/design/16chal.html?_r=1
- Seeding the City: <http://seedingthecity.org/>

Daniel Dancer, conceptual artist

- Artist's Biography: http://arts.envirolink.org/visual_arts/Daniel_Dancer/bio.html
- Zero Circles Project: http://arts.envirolink.org/visual_arts/Daniel_Dancer/index.html

Mel Chin, conceptual artist

- Artist's Biography: <http://www.greenmuseum.org/c/aen/Issues/chin.php>
- Images of Revival Field:
<http://pruned.blogspot.com/2006/01/revival-field-or-7-terrestrial.html>
<http://www.pbs.org/art21/slideshow/artists/c/chin-inst-002.jpg>
http://16sparrows.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/2008/04/15/wac_4218e.jpg

Emmet Gowin, photographer

- Artist's Biography: http://www.photography-now.net/listings/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=367&Itemid=334
- Changing the Earth – Aerial photographs: http://photography-now.net/emmet_gowin/portfolio1.html

Ran Morin, environmental sculptor

- Background on Ran Morin: <http://www.greenprophet.com/2008/11/environment-artist-ran-morin/>
- Park of Olives: <http://www.ranmorin.com/html/olivepark/parkproj.htm>
- Tilted Tree: <http://www.ranmorin.com/html/tiltree/tiltproj.htm>

350.org Global Climate Art Project

- Project Overview: <http://earth.350.org/about/>
- Project Images: <http://earth.350.org/big-pictures/>
- Other 350.org projects and images: <http://earth.350.org/>

James Cameron, film director

Interview with James Cameron, Director of Avatar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dsk492gyEak>

Hayao Miyazaki, film writer and director

- Interview with Hayao Miyazaki: http://www.oscars.org/video/watch/ev_miyazaki_01_nature.html
- Princess Mononoke trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZ4pxURy5-I&feature=related>

Sheryl Crow, singer and songwriter

- Interview with Sheryl Crow: http://environment.about.com/od/activismvolunteering/a/sheryl_crow.htm
- Recording of "Shine Over Babylon": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLNwlaJkIAM>
- Lyrics for "Shine Over Babylon": <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sherylcrow/shineoverbabylon.html>
- Lyrics for "Gasoline": <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/sherylcrow/gasoline.html>

Fiona Hall, artist

- Artist's background and description of "Force Field": <http://www.artartworks.com/art/fiona-hall-force-field-selected-works/>
- Images from "Force Field":
- http://stilgherrian.com/sydney/fiona_hall_force_field/
- <http://thejunefox.blogspot.com/2008/03/all-over-red-rover-force-field-is-up.html>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/44124381752@N01/2900810697/>

Andy Goldsworthy, sculptor

- Goldsworthy's philosophy: http://www.rwc.uc.edu/artcomm/web/w2005_2006/maria_Goldsworthy/philosophy.html
- Images of his work:
- http://www.rwc.uc.edu/artcomm/web/w2005_2006/maria_Goldsworthy/works.html
- http://www.morning-earth.org/artisnaturalists/an_goldsworthy.html
- <http://ecosalon.com/andy-goldsworthys-amazing-works-of-art/>

Erica Wheeler, singer and songwriter

- Wheeler's approach and philosophy: <http://ericawheeler.com/index.php?page=homepage>
- Recordings of "Good Summer Rain" and "To Deep Water":
<http://ericawheeler.com/index.php?page=cds&family=&category=&display=4>

Climbing Poetree: Alixa and Naima, Poets, performance artists, muralists, and activists

- Artists' approach and purpose: http://www.youtube.com/v/92z6Yx_27qs
- How they toured: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1hs9Q_8nNA
- Trailer of "Hurricane Season": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW6Qke3uXaY>

Activity 7: Experiment in Living Simply

Goal

Follow in Thoreau's footsteps by conducting your own small experiment in simple living.

Time

Introduction/Reading:

30-45 minutes


Experiment: 3 days

Discussion: 45-60 minutes

Materials

- *Thoreau Reading: "Where I Lived and What I Lived for"*
- *Thoreau Reading: "I Left the Woods"*

Find More on the Website

- *Meet Henry* (found under the Activities tab on the website) 

Before You Start

Explore the "Meet Henry" area of the website. You may want to share additional background information about Thoreau with your group.

Instructions

1. In 1845, Henry David Thoreau built a small cabin by Walden Pond and spent the next two years living what he called his "experiment" – an experiment that had a profound effect on his environmental ethic.

Read the passage from Chapter 2 of Thoreau's book *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," (see handout) and discuss his reasons for going to the pond and the principles he wanted to test.

2. Now try your own experiment in living simply. Brainstorm a list of ways you could simplify your life – things you could change about the way you live or things you possess that are not necessities. Pick something from your list and live the change for three days. Observe yourself. What effect does your experiment have on you? On other people in your life? Record your observations and thoughts in a notebook or journal.
3. Once you finish your experiment in living simply, discuss the experience with your group. Consider the following questions in your discussion:
 - What were the positive effects or benefits of your experiment?
 - What were the biggest challenges?
 - What is your definition of necessity?
 - What are some of the simple things you enjoy?
 - Does living simply look the same for everyone?
 - What does living simply look like at school? What about for a whole community or country?
 - Did your experiment influence the way you think about your relationship with the environment? If so, how did it influence your thinking? If not, do you think a longer or more extreme simplification of your life would?
4. Finish this activity by reading another passage from Thoreau's *Walden*, "I Left the Woods" (see handout) about the impact of his two-year "experiment" on his life.

Activity 7 Handout

Thoreau Reading

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion."

From Walden, Chapter 2 - "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

For Discussion and Journaling:

- What does Thoreau mean when he says he wants to shave life close and "reduce it to its lowest terms?" What did he hope this would do?
- Why do you think Thoreau moved closer to nature to conduct his experiment?
- What has your environment taught you? Have you ever visited or lived in a different "environment"? What did that environment teach you or help you understand?
- Do you live deliberately? Deeply? Simply?
- How has the meaning of the word "simply" changed in the 150 years since Thoreau lived at Walden?
- How do you think Thoreau's experiment in living simply reflected or informed his environmental ethic?

Activity 7 Handout

Thoreau Reading

"I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

From *Walden* Chapter 18 - "Conclusion"

For Discussion and Journaling:

- What is Thoreau saying his experiment in simple living "pond-side" allowed him to do? How did simplification help him? What emotional, spiritual, physical, ethical and other benefits did it have?
- How does Thoreau suggest we live life? What is his main message? Why?
- Thoreau was one person with a journal and a message to communicate. Why do you think he has had the impact he has? Do you find his story inspiring? How does his ability to tell his story help?
- Have you ever had experiences that compelled you to put "some things behind" or discover "new, universal, and more liberal laws"? How did they change you?
- How has your experiment – your environmental project – helped you pass an "invisible boundary"? How has your environmental ethic been affected?

Activity 8: Take a Stand

Goal

Clarify your own environmental ethic and its implications for your lifestyle.

Time

35-50 minutes

Materials

- Enough space to have your group spread out in a long line
- *Take a Stand Values Statements* handout

Before You Start

Arrange the room so that your group can easily move around and form a line/continuum. Indicate which end of the "line" represents the "strongly agree" side and which represents the "strongly disagree" side. Place signs on the wall to indicate each end of the spectrum.

Select 5-10 values statements to use with your group (see handout).

Instructions

1. Gather as a group in a single area. Explain the activity and show the "agree-disagree" spectrum you created (signs on wall, etc.). Encourage everyone to engage respectfully, even if strong felt or divergent opinions are presented (as they likely will be!)
2. Read one of the *Take a Stand* environmental value statements aloud to the group. Ask everyone to position themselves along the "agree" – "disagree" spectrum according to how they feel about the statement.
3. Ask group members to explain why they are standing where they are. If you have a large group, ask select members standing at various points along the spectrum to explain their view.
4. Ask if anyone wants to move to a new position, e.g., if hearing the views of others changes the way they feel about the statement. You may want to share with the group how hearing from others influenced your own thinking.
5. After completing the set of values statements, have everyone write a short reflection (1 page) discussing what they learned about their environmental ethic from the activity. Use these questions to help you reflect:
 - Did any of your responses surprise you?
 - Was it difficult to place yourself on the spectrum for some of the values statements? If so, why?
 - Did you change your position on the spectrum when you heard what others in your group had to say? How did hearing their thinking affect your own?

- Is your environmental ethic immutable or does it change depending on the context in which you are applying it? If it changes, how do place and context affect it? If it does not change, how do you apply the same ethic to very different contexts?
- How does your environmental ethic inform your choices about the way you live day-to-day right now? Are there areas of dissonance between your ethic and your lifestyle? If so, how do you handle these?

Extension Activity

Ask students to come up with their own environmental values statement, possibly addressing a topic of local importance.

Activity 8 Handout

"Take a Stand" Value Statements

1. People have a right to use nature for their own benefit.
2. People are responsible for taking care of the earth.
3. Humans are separate from the environment.
4. It is more important to meet people's basic material needs than to protect the environment.
5. People need to share the earth's resources with all life on the planet.
6. People are no more important than insects, plants, bacteria, and all the other forms of life on earth.
7. It is possible for people to live in harmony with nature and without hurting the environment.
8. The earth's resources are there for people to use for whatever purpose they want.
9. Conservation is important because nature has intrinsic value unrelated to its utility to people.
10. People are part of a complex ecosystem, so every action they take affects all the elements of the system.
11. Conservation is important because there may be useful resources in nature that we have not yet discovered.
12. It is important to follow cultural and community traditions, even if they are damaging to the planet.
13. Places that are close to me are more important than places that are far away.
14. The negative impact that people have on the planet should be evenly distributed across all communities and ecosystems.
15. Everyone is equally responsible for reducing his/her impact on the planet.
16. It is important to live a life that is as environmentally responsible as possible.
17. I am willing to make radical changes to the way I live in order to protect the environment.
18. It is the government's responsibility to protect the environment.
19. The number of people living on earth is the primary source of our environmental problems.
20. Given limited resources for conservation, we should protect those natural areas that are most useful to people.

21. Technological innovation will overcome the environmental problems that humans have created.
22. People need to live simpler, less consumptive lives if they are going to live in harmony with nature.
23. I am willing to pay more for goods and services that are produced in an environmentally responsible way.
24. When assessing the value of a project that will have environmental impact, the project should go forward if the benefits to society are deemed greater than the environmental cost, even if the environmental costs are significant.
25. Future generations have a right to a clean, healthy environment.
26. The land and resources of the world belong to all living things.
27. Business and markets are the best tools we have to address environmental problems.
28. Where and how to use land should be based on creating the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
29. Respect for native cultures and traditions is part of respecting the natural world.
30. The elements of nature (biotic and abiotic) and natural systems have value simply because they exist.

Activity 9: Transcending Boundaries

Goal

Reveal the shared concerns and interconnectedness of people and nature.

Time

60 minutes

Materials

- *Image Cards* handout
- Painter's tape or poster-sized paper and markers
- Removable glue dots

Before You Start

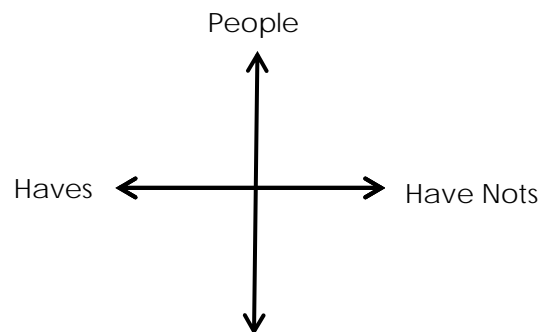
Cut up the Image Cards so that you have one image per card. If you have a group of more 5 people, make duplicate card sets so that there is one set for every group of 5 people.

Alternatively, you might ask your group to provide some or all of the images for this activity (cut from magazines or printed from the internet) – or use actual objects. In this case, ask group members to find pictures or objects from home that reflect important aspects of “youth culture” or “American culture” – and that it's up to them to define this. If you use pictures, provide the same set of Image Cards for each group. If you use objects, each group could have a unique set of items.

The goal of this activity is to explore ways people weigh concern for people and concern for nature and how our perspectives and decisions might vary depending on our material circumstances - or we may share concerns but manifest them differently. You may need to prompt your group during debrief discussions to help them come to these realizations.

Instructions

1. Divide your group up into small groups of five people or fewer. Distribute one complete set of image cards to each group.
2. Have each group create a matrix* like the one shown below. You can draw it on flip chart or poster paper or use painter's tape and labels to create it on a table top.

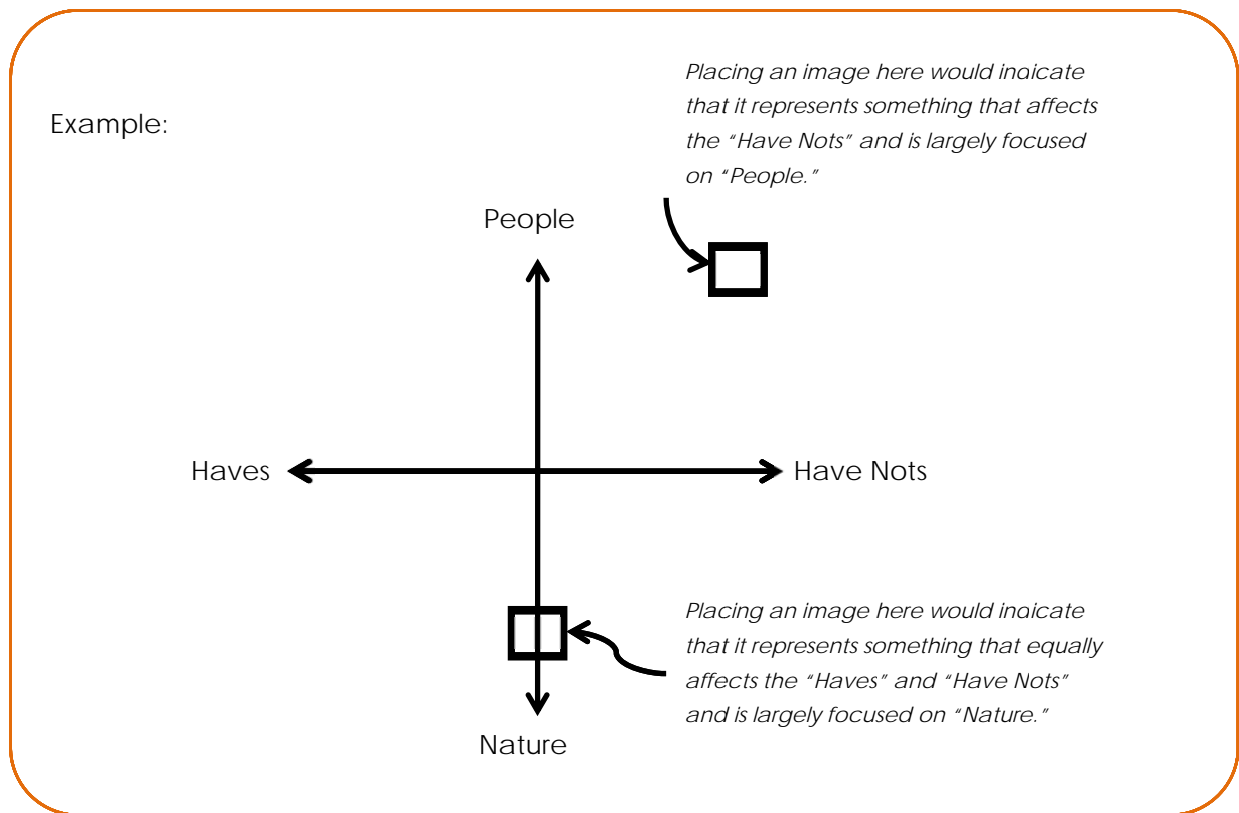


* Source: The Center for Whole Communities, Fayston, VT

Next, discuss each Image Card as a group. Try to reach consensus about where to place it on the matrix. (Use removable glue dots or tape to hold images in place if using a flip chart or paper on the wall.)

- Does the image represent something that affects people who are affluent (the "Haves") or those with little material wealth (the "Have Nots")?
- Does it reflect more of a concern for people or nature?

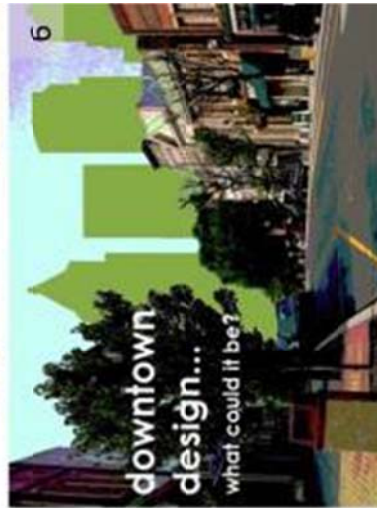
If your group can't agree on where to place the card, put it aside, in a separate pile, on the table.



3. After you have finished placing images on the matrix, discuss the following questions with your small group:
 - Did you have trouble placing any of the images? Why or why not?
 - What assumptions does this matrix make about both "Haves/Have Nots" and "People/Nature?" Do you think these assumptions are valid? Why or why not?
4. If you are working in small groups, post all the finished matrices on the wall together and allow time for everyone to see each other's work. Then, as a full group, discuss the following questions:
 - What was challenging about this exercise?
 - What were some of the differences between groups?
 - How are the concerns of affluent and impoverished people the same? How are they different? Can you give examples?

- How has your personal experience affected the way you interact with nature? How has it affected the way you think about the environment?
- What is the relationship between people and nature?

Image Cards





12



15



18



11



14



17



10



13



16

Activity 10: The Same Sun

Goal


Learn about student projects and environmental issues in other parts of the world, and explore similarities and differences in how other students think about the environment.

Reflect on how understanding issues and values elsewhere shape your own personal environmental ethic.

Time

60-90 minutes

Materials

- *Thoreau Reading: "We might try our lives"*
- *Project Showcase* 

Before You Start

Consider doing Activity 9 before doing this one. The two activities work very well together. The activity extensions suggested below can help you link the two activities.

Instructions

1. Thoreau believed that connecting with nature helps us better connect with and understand each other. Read the short passage from Chapter 1 of *Walden* and discuss why nature has this ability.
2. Find a project done by students in some other part of the country or world by browsing the Project Showcase on the *World Wide Waldens* site.
 - What was the project and why was it important to them? What issue or need does it address?
 - Is the issue unique to their area or do you also face the same one?
 - Would your project have any relevance for them?
 - What questions would you ask the students if you could speak with them?

Extension Activities

If you also did Activity 9, consider the following:

- Where on the matrix would you initially have placed the project from the Project Showcase that you chose to review?
- Now that you have completed both Activity 9 and Activity 10, has your thinking about how the Showcase project fits on the matrix (or whether the matrix makes sense at all) changed? If so, how?
- Can you make an argument that every project is about both people and nature? That every project is about the Haves and Have Nots? Try it with the project you reviewed.

Activity 10 Handout

Thoreau Reading

"We might try our lives by a thousand simple tests; as, for instance, that the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. If I had remembered this it would have prevented some mistakes. This was not the light in which I hoed them. The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles! What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment! Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant? We should live in all the ages of the world in an hour; ay, in all the worlds of the ages."

From Walden Chapter 1 – "Economy"

For Discussion and Journaling:

- What fundamental characteristic of the environment does Thoreau remind us about? Why is it so important to understand this, especially in our age?
- Is it important to "look through each other's eyes" or to understand "all the ages of the world in an hour"? What do we gain? What happens when we don't?
- How do you personally find ways to look through another's eyes? Do you apply the same approach across all areas of your life - for example, relationships, school, your environmental ethic, etc.
- Identify some environmental problems or situations in the world that you think result from lack of knowledge, perspective, or different interests.

Activity 11: What's Your Ethic?

Goal

Articulate your environmental ethic and envision how it might change and grow.

Time

60-90 minutes

Find More on the Website

- *Live Deliberately Essay Contest* 

Instructions

1. Try to describe your personal environmental ethic to someone else – a member of your group, friend or family member. Is it easy or difficult to do? Why?
2. Next, write a short belief statement, personal manifesto, credo, poem, or perhaps a letter to Thoreau, which summarizes your ethic (1-2 paragraphs or 50 words or less!). Alternatively, make a short video clip explaining your ethic. Use the following prompts to help you organize your thoughts.
 - What is your view of nature and its value?
 - What do you care most strongly about? What core principles or beliefs guide your approach to environmental issues?
 - How do your views on the environment affect your behavior and decisions you make?
 - Where do you feel the most tension between your principles and actions? Where is it most challenging to live up to your own personal ethic? How do you handle the challenge?
 - If you feel comfortable, share drafts of your statements with each other. Once you have a final version, put a copy in your wallet, post it where you can see it, or place it in an envelope, journal, or any place it won't get lost so that you can open it later, like a time capsule.
3. Your environmental ethic will grow and change as you do. Perhaps it already has. If you did an environmental action project of some kind, how did that experience change your environmental ethic? Your environmental ethic may also guide you differently in different situations. How big a role do you anticipate your environmental ethic will play in your life?

Imagine the future. How do you think your ethic will influence:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Your choice of friends | • Where you live |
| • Your clothing style | • Your choice of community or national leaders |
| • What you eat | • Your health |
| • Your choice of career or potential employer | |

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



World Wide Waldens

www.worldwidewaldens.org

