



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

## AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

### *A River Ran Wild*

By Lynne Cherry

### Teacher's Guide

By Barbara Ashby

## Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to environmental and public policy issues through Lynne Cherry's picture book *A River Ran Wild: An Environmental History*. The book tells the story of community-based efforts to rescue the Nashua River in Massachusetts from ecological disaster. It traces the history of the river from its early use by Native Americans through hundreds of years of misuse during the Industrial Revolution and factory pollution in the twentieth century. Environmental activist Marion Stoddart and her work leading citizen groups are introduced. Her effort to gain passage of national environmental legislation provides opportunities to explore and discuss public policy with students.

The lesson can be used as a part of the School Violence Prevention Development Program (SVPDP) and works well with the concepts found in the Responsibility lessons of the *Foundations of Democracy* curriculum and the idea of common good found in *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. However, the lesson focuses primarily on the steps involved in completing *We the People: Project Citizen*. Students compare and contrast the steps taken by the citizens in the book with steps taken in their own project.

## Suggested Grade Level

Upper elementary

## Estimated Time to Complete

One class period or more depending on chosen activities

## Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson the students will be able to

- identify the impact that pollution had on the people and places along the Nashua River;
- describe public policy and how it can be used to solve community problems; and
- compare and contrast the sequence of events in the story with the steps involved in completing *Project Citizen*.

## Materials Needed

- Classroom set of *A River Ran Wild* by Lynne Cherry

- Classroom set of *Project Citizen* books
- Classroom sets of graphic organizers
- Posters, rulers, crayons, construction papers, etc. for posters and signs

### Before the Lesson

1. Develop a list of words from *A River Ran Wild* for word study and word wall (quench, pulp, grist, Industrial Revolution, etc.)
2. Choose and prepare some additional activities to do after reading the book.
  - Conduct an author/illustrator study of Lynne Cherry.
  - Working in pairs, ask students to complete a Sequencing Graphic Organizer for *A River Ran Wild*.
  - Working in teams of three or four, have students complete a Cause and Effect Graphic Organizer.
  - Conduct a class discussion on what is and what is not public policy.
  - Using the Library Media Center or a computer, have students conduct research on the Nashua River, the Nashua River Watershed Association, and the Clean Water Act.
  - Present a lesson on persuasive letter writing.
  - Students write letters to the paper mills explaining why they should stop dumping waste into the Nashua River.
  - Students create posters and signs protesting pollution of the Nashua River.

### Lesson Procedures

1. Review the vocabulary you selected for your class.
  2. Conduct a shared reading of *A River Ran Wild*. (Be sure to read the Author's Notes.)
  3. Discussion questions
    - What would daily life be like along the Nashua River if concerned citizens had not taken action to clean up the river?
    - How did the Native Americans treat the land and the Nashua River?
    - What impact did the Industrial Revolution have on the Nashua River?
    - Who were Marion Stoddard and Oweana and why are they important to the Nashua River?
    - What role did citizens participation play in the history of the Nashua River?
  4. Working as whole group and teams, have the class conduct a mini Project Citizen based on the problems, events, and community activities in *A River Ran Wild*. (Use the *Project Citizen* book as a guide through the process.)
    - Identify the problem and write a problem statement.
    - Identify any existing policies that were in place to deal with the problem.
    - Did the citizens in the book propose a specific public policy to deal with the problem?
    - Identify the steps taken by the citizens to influence government. What was their action plan?
1. Conduct any other activities you chose before the lesson.

## Assessment

Sample persuasive letter writing rubric

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg\\_Rubric.pdf](http://teacher.scholastic.com/LessonPlans/LtrWritg_Rubric.pdf)

Sample research rubric for middle school students

[http://download.intel.com/education/Common/en/Resources/AP/library/research\\_process\\_middle.pdf](http://download.intel.com/education/Common/en/Resources/AP/library/research_process_middle.pdf)

Student reflection on the lesson and activities using pages 53–55 in the *Project Citizen* book

## Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards, Reading: Informational Text, Grade 4

Key Ideas and Details

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 4 topic or subject area*.
5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

English Language Arts Standards, Writing, Grade 4

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

English Language Arts Standards, Language, Grade 4

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

## Correlations to SVPDP Curricula (Optional)

SVPDP Curricula	Location	Lesson Related Content
<i>We the People: The Citizen &amp; the Constitution</i>	Elementary Text Unit 1, Lesson 3	The Common Good, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary
<i>Foundations of Democracy</i>	Responsibility Unit 2 Lessons 3, 4, 5	Costs and Benefits of Responsibility, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary
<i>We the People: Project Citizen</i>	Level 1 Text Steps 1–6	Cause and Effect, Public Policy, Citizen Participation, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary

