

Humans vs. Nature: Can We Get Along?

Materials

- Internet access
- up-to-date newspapers and magazines

Objectives

- To learn how human activities affect plants and animals.
- To understand what plants and animals need to survive.
- To explore resolutions to conflicts that threaten our environment.

Introduction

For millions of years, humans have relied on nature for a variety of resources — water, food, land, and other materials for survival. But with an increasing human population, limited resources, and dwindling animal and plant populations, conflict arises. Now more than ever, headlines and news stories are reporting serious conflicts between humans and nature. Issues include habitat encroachment and destruction, hunting (legally and illegally), pollution, and resource competition.

Action

1. Ask students to examine newspapers, magazines, or online resources for events that involve conflict between how humans use the environment and the needs of plants and animals. Examples include:

- Disputes over land for various reasons (oil exploration, construction, forest clearing)
- Legal and illegal hunting
- Pollution damaging various ecosystems
- Global climate change

Encourage students to review several sources to compare and contrast viewpoints. Allow about one week for students to gather enough resources.

2. Students will bring their findings to class. Make sure they include sources or names of the organizations that published the information. Collect events and briefly discuss the main issue (you may want to write them on the board for easy reference).

3. Divide students into even groups (of at least 4) and let each group choose one event. Further divide each group into two groups — a “human” group and a “nature” group. Each

group will spend a few days gathering information and preparing an argument. Encourage the “human” group to take on viewpoints of the various people involved: lawmakers, environmentalists, community members, land developers, etc.

4. Once students have prepared their arguments, ask each group to present their arguments in a debate format. Set a time limit and allow audience members to challenge each group with questions.

5. After each debate, reflect as a class. Is there an easy solution to the conflict? How does each part of society contribute to the understanding of the conflict? How do political or economic agendas drive these conflicts? How does the media affect public opinion?

Global climate change, overfishing, and exploration for natural resources challenge Arctic ecosystems. Without caution, many species may become extinct due to human causes.

