



Eighth Grade - Guatemala

Lesson 2: Protecting the Guatemalan Rainforest through Certification

Overview

Students explore different criteria that may be involved in forest certification and consider the benefits of certification to the Guatemalan rainforest and rainforest communities. They then create a brochure to educate family, friends, and other students about the benefits of buying certified forests products when they have the choice.

Subjects

Social Studies, Science, Language Arts

Concepts

From PLT Conceptual Framework:

1.9 The standard of living of various peoples throughout the world is dependent on environmental quality; the availability, utilization, and distribution of resources; the government; and culture of its inhabitants.

2.8 Human societies and cultures throughout the world interact with each other and affect natural systems upon which they depend.

2.12 The extracting, processing, transporting, and marketing of natural resources provide employment opportunities for many people.

5.9 Consumers “drive” the marketplace with their demands for goods and services. Such demands shift with time and may have positive or negative effects on the resource base and environmental quality.

Skills

Classifying and Categorizing, Discussing, Interpreting, Synthesizing and Creating

Objectives

Students will describe what forest certification is.

Students will identify ways that certification can benefit the environment, the people who live in and near the forest, and the consumer.

Additional Resources and Student Pages

- **Resource Index** - Check out this page at <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/education/teachers/curriculum/resources/index.html> for additional supplemental materials that complement these dynamic units and to access many of the resources listed below.
- **Slideshow** – The Learning Site provides a slideshow that will introduce students to the country of Guatemala, the wildlife and people of the country and the

conservation issues they face. The slideshow can be downloaded for viewing in the classroom, printed out and read aloud or viewed online with the students.

- **Species Profiles** – The species profiles, available to view on screen or downloaded from the Resource Index, include photos, along with information on habitat, foraging behavior, group relationships, threats, and many more facts.
- **Student Resources Pages**
 - Forest Certification Principles
 - Certified Products from Guatemala
 - Brochure Format
- **Rainforest Poster** – Download and print out this colorful two-page poster, which is available for you to use in explaining the layers of the rainforest, its products and the environmental threats facing many rainforests around the world.

Inside the Canopy - Structure and species of the rainforest

Status Report - What is happening to the rainforest

- **Rainforest Products** – Visit <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resources/forest-facts/lives.html> for a summary of products that we use in our everyday lives that originate in the rainforests. Both teachers and students will find information on the products found in their homes and supermarkets that either originated in tropical forests or are currently produced there.
- **Profiles in Sustainability** – Visit <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/profiles/index.html> for case studies on companies who work closely with the Rainforest Alliance to ensure that their practices protect wildlife, workers and communities.
- **Certificate of Accomplishment** - Print out colorful rainforest certificates for your students to commemorate their completion of these units.

Materials

Copies of student pages, wall-size world map, sample brochures (optional), paper, colored pencils

Time Considerations

Preparation: Part A – 20 minutes, Part B – 20 minutes or more

Part A – 45 minutes

Part B – 45 minute session, plus time to make brochures

Background

Healthy rainforests are a critical part of the web of life. They release oxygen through their leaves, filter pollutants from the air, and help stabilize the global climate by absorbing carbon dioxide. They also provide us with valuable resources like wood, food, and medicinal plants.

Forest certification is one approach to protecting rainforests and other forests from destructive practices. It is a way to inform consumers that a particular wood, paper, or other forest product comes from a forest or a company that meets strict environmental and social standards. An independent organization evaluates the practices of the forest manager and identifies the certified product with a seal or other marking.

Consumer demand for certified products gives an incentive for retailers and manufacturers to look for certified forest suppliers. This in turn drives forest managers to use environmentally and socially sound practices that will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the forests and the communities that depend on them.

Related PLT Activities

Tropical Treehouse (*PreK-8 Guide*), Understanding the Effects of Forest Uses (*Forests of the World*)

Getting Ready

For Part A, make copies of the “Forest Certification” student page.

For Part B, make copies of the “Certified Products from Guatemala” and “Brochure Format” student pages. Make a sample from the student page by cutting out the Side One and Side Two illustrations, taping them back-to-back, and then folding on the dotted lines. (Optional) Collect several brochures from your community for examples.

Doing the Activity

Part A – Forest Certification

1. Introduce the activity by having students imagine going to the store to buy a composition notebook for school. Ask, “Which notebook would you buy if you find two that are pretty much the same, but Notebook A costs \$2.49 and Notebook B costs \$1.99? What factors might you consider in deciding which to buy?” List these factors on the board and have students identify those that are most important to them.
2. Ask students how it might influence their choice if you knew that Notebook A was made by a company that only uses paper fiber from recycled paper or from forests that are carefully maintained, while Notebook B was made by a company that uses the cheapest paper fiber it can get, no matter the source. What if they knew that Notebook A’s company pays its employees a high enough wage to support their families, while Notebook B’s pays only the absolute minimum allowed by law?

Point out that these examples show that our consumer choices can affect much more than just our own wallets: they can affect the health of the forest and the lives of workers, among other things. Ask, “What else might your choice of notebook affect? (List their ideas on the board.) When you are at the store, you can see the price of an item, but how would you know about these other aspects?”

3. Explain that forest certification is one way for consumers to know that a particular product comes from a forest that is managed with certain environmental and social considerations in mind. Forest certification is a process where an independent organization checks out the company's forestry practices, and then puts a label on the wood or other forest product to show that the company satisfies specific requirements.
4. Give students copies of the "Forest Certification Principles" student page. Read the 10 principles as a class. After making sure that students understand what each of the principles describes, have the class identify which principles emphasize the environment, which emphasize social and cultural aspects, and which emphasize businesses or economics. Point out that a particular principle may fall into more than one of these categories.
5. Ask students individually to put a star next to the five principles they think are most important. Then, in small groups, have students discuss their choices and try to reach a group consensus about the top five. Ask several groups to share their top choices.
6. Lead a class discussion: Which principles did most groups include in their top five? Which of these are most important for the people who live in or near the forest? Which are most important for consumers? Which are most important for the business making or selling the product? Which are most important for the forest environment? How are all the principles related to each other? What might happen if we only did what is best for the forest? For people?

Part B – Certified Products Brochure

1. Ask students what they know or have heard about Guatemala. If they do not know where Guatemala is, help them find it on the world map.
2. Give students a copy of the "Certified Products from Guatemala" student page and have them read about how forest certification affects the Guatemalan rainforest and the people living within it. Discuss:
 - What products do the people of Uaxactún get from the forest?
 - How has certifying xate and wood helped the community of Uaxactún?
 - How has it helped to protect the rainforest around Uaxactún?
 - What are other benefits of certification? (Begin a list of the benefits on the board.)
 - What might be disadvantages of certification?
 - What can we do to teach our families and friends about the value of certified forest products?
3. Explain that students will make brochures to inform others about forest product certification and the benefits of buying certified forest products when they have a choice. (Optional) Show a few sample brochures, and have students point some of the techniques used in them.
4. Give students copies of the "Brochure Format" student page. Show them the sample you made (see Getting Ready) so that they can see how the different panels and spreads will work together when folded. Go over the suggested

brochure format and encourage students to think about the most effective text and illustrations to include in their brochures. Suggest that they include some of the benefits of certification listed in step 2, and that they also address factors that influence what people buy (as explored in Part A).

5. Allow time for students to complete their brochures, and then have them present the brochures to family members and peers. Follow up by asking students how effective they thought their brochures were and how they might improve them.

Enrichment

Check with local florists or wholesale flower distributors to find out when and where xate (also known as jade palm or fishtail palm) is available in your area. Find out how much it costs and whether it is known to be forest certified. If possible, get some sample fronds for students to observe first-hand.

Invite a guest to speak with the class about certified forest products available in your community. Help students brainstorm a list of questions to ask your guest, such as:

- What certified products does your company offer?
- Where do the products come from?
- Who certifies the products?
- Do you prefer one certification program over another?
- How do certified products benefit the consumer or our community?
- Does certification have any downsides or shortcomings?

Assessment Opportunity

Use students' brochures to assess their learning about forest product certification and its benefits.

Additional Resource

Slide show about Guatemala developed by the Rainforest Alliance

Online photo scrapbook of children living in the Maya Biosphere Reserve:
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/education/treehouse/myworld/index.html>

Report - Impact of FSC Certification on Deforestation and the Incidence of Wildfires in the Maya Biosphere Reserve by David Hughell and Rebecca Butterfield (2008) available at http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/forestry/documents/peten_study.pdf.