

Role Play: Talking About Environmental Justice

Grade Level:	Time Frame:
9th Grade 10th Grade 11th Grade 12th Grade	50 minutes
Standards (English Language Arts):	
<p>6. Compare and/or contrast the perspectives in a variety of fiction, nonfiction, informational, digital, and multimodal texts produced from diverse historical, cultural, and global points of view, not limited to the grade-level literary focus.</p> <p>9. Compose both short and extended narrative, informative/explanatory, and argumentative writings that are clear and coherent, use an appropriate command of language, and demonstrate development, organization, style, and tone that are relevant to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>a. Write a memoir, narrative essay, or personal or fictional narrative to convey a series of events, establishing a clear purpose and using narrative techniques.</p> <p>11. Participate in collaborative discussions involving multiple perspectives, responding and contributing with relevant evidence and commentary.</p> <p>6. Compare and/or contrast the perspectives in a variety of fiction, nonfiction, informational, digital, and multimodal texts produced from diverse historical, cultural, and global viewpoints, not limited to the grade-level literary focus.</p> <p>9. Compose both short and extended narrative, informative/explanatory, and argumentative writings that are clear and coherent, use an appropriate command of language, and demonstrate development, organization, style, and tone that are relevant to task, purpose, and audience.</p>	

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a. Write a memoir, narrative essay, or personal or fictional narrative to convey a series of events, establishing a clear purpose, using narrative techniques, and sequencing events coherently.

11. Participate in collaborative discussions involving multiple perspectives, responding and contributing with relevant evidence and commentary.

15. Create and deliver an individual or collaborative presentation that is suitable in purpose and tone for its intended audience and occasion.

7. Compare and/or contrast the perspectives in a variety of fiction, nonfiction, informational, digital, and multimodal texts produced from diverse historical, cultural, and global viewpoints, not limited to the grade level literary focus.

14. Participate in collaborative discussions involving multiple cultural and literary perspectives, responding to, contributing to, building upon, and questioning the ideas of others with relevant, appropriate evidence and commentary.

18. Create and deliver an oral presentation, created collaboratively from individual contributions, that is suitable in purpose and tone for its intended audience and occasion.

7. Compare and/or contrast the perspectives in a variety of fiction, nonfiction, informational, digital, and multimodal texts produced from diverse historical, cultural, and global viewpoints, not limited to the grade level literary focus.

14. Actively engage in collaborative discussions about topics and texts, expressing their own ideas by respectfully contributing to, building upon, and questioning the ideas of others in pairs, diverse groups, and whole class settings.

18. Create and deliver an oral presentation, created collaboratively from individual contributions, that is suitable in purpose and tone for its intended audience and occasion.

Objectives:

Students will compare and contrast the details of a character's story and list issues and actions related to environmental and climate justice and actively engage in collaborative discussion about character perspectives.

Students will create a short character narrative related to environmental and climate justice and deliver an oral presentation to represent their writing.

Background Information:

Although the American Dream includes the right to live in healthy, thriving communities, there are, in fact, many populations that lack access to safe places to live, work, grow, play, and learn. Historically, minority communities have been targets of industrial pollution and inadequate infrastructure which have led to increased amounts of health issues such as cancers and asthma. Now, those same communities are more likely to experience the impact of climate change such as flooding and extreme weather events which can lead to additional health and safety issues.

The **environmental justice movement** was started by individuals, primarily people of color, who sought to address the inequity of environmental protection (EPA, 2022). Securing **environmental justice** and **climate justice** for communities requires development of policies and action on local, state, and federal levels. The White House has developed several strategies for addressing these issues such as the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC).

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (U.S. Department of Energy, 2021).

Important strategies focusing on **environmental justice** include harmful greenhouse gas emissions, advancing energy efficiency and clean energy, and strengthening community resilience and livability (NAACP, 2022).

There are many stories from people nationwide who have been affected by issues of environmental injustice and many who have been motivated to take action in the movement towards environmental justice. In this activity, students will consider the perspectives of different people of various backgrounds and consider their contribution to the environmental justice movement.

Materials:

- 6 Role Play Character readings cut out from “Role Play Characters” file
- FOR EACH STUDENT:
 - Copy of “Talking About Environmental Justice Graphic Organizer”

Engage (15 minutes):

1. Teacher should select 6 student volunteers to perform the 6 character readings for the class.
2. **Listen up!** Students will listen to each of the role play readings.
 - a. While students listen, they should complete “Part 1, Analyzing Perspectives:” by listing “issues” and “actions” in the appropriate column.
 - b. Teacher may want to provide examples for “issues” and “actions” before starting the readings. Or use one of the characters as an example.
3. As a class, students will discuss the “issues” and “actions” in each character scenario.

Explore (30 minutes):

1. **Create it!** Students will work in pairs to create their own character and one-paragraph environmental and/or climate justice story.
 - a. Students will use “Part 2: Writing Your Own Story:” to develop their story and prepare to share it with the class.
2. **Share it!** When each pair has finished writing their short story, they will read them aloud to the class.
 - a. Students will continue using “Part 1, Analyzing Perspectives:” by listing “issues” and “actions” in the appropriate column based on their classmates' stories.

Evaluate (5 minutes):

1. **Reflect on what you learned!** Students will write their final thoughts using the space provided in “Part 3: Drawing Conclusions:” of the graphic organizer.

References:

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/>
<https://www.energy.gov/lm/services/environmental-justice/what-environmental-justice>
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/climate-justice/>
<https://naacp.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice>

Roberto Perez

My name is Roberto Perez. I'm sorry my English is not very good. My wife and I came here, legally, as immigrants from Cuba. We decided to relocate to Miami when there were not enough jobs in our home country. We owned a successful restaurant there until Hurricane Ian destroyed the building and part of our home. We wanted to have children there but now we have decided it is better for their lives to be here in the United States. Now, my wife Maria is expecting our first child. We have a food truck with Cuban traditional food that is very popular in Miami. We enjoy preparing food for customers but this summer was much hotter than normal. Maria got very sick and had to lie down. Now, we only let her work at home where it is cooler. We hope that we can continue our business so that our family can live comfortably.

Dr. Cynthia Zimmerman

My name is Dr. Cynthia Zimmerman. I am the senior research scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, also known as NOAA. Currently, my team of scientists have been busy analyzing state-of-the-art models that simulate the effects that climate change and variability will have on the world. Our goal is to help people understand and prepare for events like summer heat waves and droughts, hurricanes and flooding, changing oceans and affected marine life, along with many other concerns related to a changing climate. As the global atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration hit record highs we must stay alert in providing communication and sharing data for the public's good. Using advanced technology, we are able to provide better forecasts and warnings for natural disasters that will affect our Earth, our communities, and our future.

Mia Evans-Jones

My name is Mia Evans-Jones and I am the voice. I am the voice for the coral reefs threatened by a warming ocean. I am the voice for desperate third world countries flooded and polluted because of carbon emissions and waste disposal from surrounding developed nations. I am the voice for the rainforests destroyed by deforestation and each tree with its life threatened to be cut from beneath. I am the voice for young children deterred from playing outside because of lack of safe and healthy green spaces. I am the voice for my fellow teenagers able to make a difference by taking a stand against a polluted world and a rapidly changing climate. I am the voice of our future.

Jasmine Johnson

My name is Jasmine Johnson. I serve as Director of the Communities for Environmental Justice Law Center. My colleagues and I work with low-income communities who are affected by poor air quality and polluted environments. The work that we do is pro bono, which means we offer free services to people in need. Our objectives include enhancing the quality of life for these communities by requiring local agencies to improve environmental conditions and influencing lawmakers to establish policies that protect their citizens. I am passionate about my work because I was raised in a low-income neighborhood near a toxic waste site. The toxic chemicals from coal plants were shipped to a landfill next to my neighborhood and dumped there which seeped into our drinking water. Many of family members that lived there were diagnosed with cancer at a young age, including my Grandma who took care of me. I hope that the action we take today can provide a better tomorrow for next generation minority communities.

Governor Tony Rodriguez

My name is Governor Tony Rodriguez and I approve this message. Our state deserves a commitment to bold climate action...*for the people*. In order to uphold environmental justice, enhance public health, and maximize economic benefits we must take action now. As your Governor, I will ensure immediate steps are taken to establish targets for zero-emission vehicles, improve public transit, and expand staffing for support of environmental justice. We, as citizens, are feeling the impacts of climate change. From our farmers affected by drought to our children experiencing asthma symptoms in smog-smothered cities, we require change. I declare carbon neutral by 2050, for our state, for our communities, for our livelihoods.

Michael Jenkins

My name is Michael Jenkins but most people call me Mikey. I've been playing basketball for four years and I'm getting really good. I'm only eleven years old but I'm almost tall enough to dunk the ball! I like to practice on the courts by our apartment with the older guys but sometimes when there is too much stuff in the air my mom doesn't let me go outside. She calls it smog, or something weird like that. I know she is just trying to help me because I start coughing and have to use the inhaler if the air is too dirty. I have asthma pretty bad. I hope if I make the middle school team then I can play on the indoor courts at school so I won't have to worry about all the dumb pollution stuff.

Talking About Environmental Justice



Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

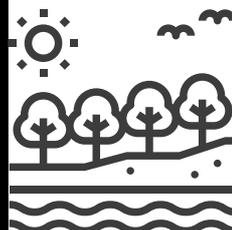
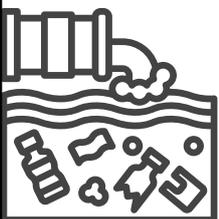
Part 1, Analyzing Perspectives:

As you listen to the stories from each of the characters in the role play, make a list of "issues" that you hear that might affect environmental justice and/or climate justice. In addition, list any "action" being taken to achieve environmental and/or climate justice.

issues



action



Talking About Environmental Justice



Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Part 2, Writing Your Own Story:

After listening to perspectives of the role play characters, create your own environmental and/or climate justice story. Write one paragraph about your character in the space below. You will read the story aloud for the class to add to their "issues" and "action" lists.

Part 3, Drawing Conclusions:

Reflect on the activity below by considering the following:
Did your perspective change after hearing about the experiences of other people?
Yes or no? Why or why not?