

Sample EF Activities

Comparing how people lived in the past and present

A more detailed extension of these activities specific to food and the food system can be seen in “Food Footprints through Time” (students compare and contrast food and food footprints in different time periods)

- 1. Researching resource use ('sources and sinks') in history:** Have students research a specific element of everyday life at a chosen point in history; options include clothing, food, housing, transportation, or energy usage. Students should focus their research on the environmental impacts of producing the item (such as clothing), or of meeting the particular need (such as transportation).

Research should include:

- What the item was made from
- the path the item took from its origins to the user (ex: path of a shoe from the cow to the cobbler to the peasant, or the process of getting coal used to power a train or heat a home in the 19th century)
- the wastes usage involved, and what happened to them (ex: the disposal of food or animal waste, or the emissions created by coal)

****Readings on resource use throughout time available on pg. 5.****

- 2. Recording research through diagrams:**

Have students create diagrams or maps showing the environmental impacts they researched. Diagrams can include pictures, words, arrows, and other symbols to show the resources used, their origins; the path of manufacturing, usage, and disposal; and the wastes created along the way. Encourage students to include as many details as they can and to cite resources and sinks at each step. Have student put a box around the end products of each step (air pollution, contaminated river, etc.). Students can write a narrative to accompany their diagrams.

Optional: Have students create a second map showing the resources used for the same item today. Students can write an additional narrative and/or create graphs, charts, or Venn diagrams to contrast resources used, wastes produced, miles traveled (i.e., of a food or clothing item), or other information.

- 3. Timelines:**

Have students create a timeline of the technological developments between the past and the present. For example, if students researched transportation in the 19th century, the timeline would include transportation developments from that point until today. How have these developments increased or decreased EFs over time? How might future developments affect EFs?

- 4. Diary accounts:**

Have students read and/or write a diary entry of someone preparing or producing the item they researched. (Ex: The diary of someone making clothing in Colonial America; the diary of someone working a specific food item at a particular time period. If students write the entries, have them include details about the tools or technology used, how the resources were obtained and processed, and how the item got from the producer to the user.

Variation 1: Have students write two diary entries from the perspective of two people in different social classes. (See the articles on food eaten by slaves and slave owners as an example.)

Variation 2: Have students write the diary entry from the perspective of a particular resource or item (such as clothing or a food item).

