



Environmental Justice Lesson

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Alone or with a group, complete this worksheet using information and links found throughout the worksheet. Save the information gathered and the understanding you gain with this worksheet as you plan out your design for a city of the future and/or your public campaign on the environmental impact of smartphones.

OVERVIEW

When learning about and discussing the role of environmental engineers, it is important to understand what environmental justice is, how to recognize injustices and develop solutions that protect all people from environmental hazards.

1. What is Environmental justice?

What comes to mind when you see the word "Justice"? Write a short response:

Now write down what you think "Environmental Justice" means.

What would you expect/want in terms of the environment around you and the impact on your life?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "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. EPA states, "this goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys:

- The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and
- Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work."¹

To learn more, [play the video interview](#) between high school student, Emma and Professor David Pellow, Dehlsen Chair and Professor of Environmental Studies and Director of the Global Environmental Justice Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

¹ See www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice.



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An example of environmental injustice:

You have probably heard about the problems with the drinking water in Flint, Michigan in the news. Learn more about this water crisis here:

- www.nrdc.org/stories/flint-water-crisis-everything-you-need-know
- www.globalonenessproject.org/library/photo-essays/fall-flint

*What has been the impact of this water crisis on the people of Flint?
Why is this an example of environmental injustice?*

2. Exploration of Environmental Justice Issues:

What are the issues people face in our society concerning environmental justice?

Take one of the research statements on the attached sheet and write your responses to the following statements:

- *Would you consider this an issue of environmental justice? Why or why not?*
- *What might be the impacts of this on the people affected in this situation?*
- *Why might it be difficult for the people affected in this situation to relocate to another area?*



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3. To further explore issues of environmental justice, below are three categories with prompt questions for each. Based on guidance from your instructor, write a one-page response paper to provides answers to one or all of the categories in the table below.

Status & Locality	Government	Your Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is environmental justice related to socioeconomic status? • How does environmental justice differ in an upper-class neighborhood verses a high poverty neighborhood? • How might it differ in urban versus rural areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are individuals responsible for regulating environmental justice or should government be responsible? • What are the actions that individuals can take to promote environmental justice? • What are the actions that local, state and federal government agencies can take to promote environmental justice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sources of pollution exist in your community? • Where are these located in terms of the neighborhoods in your community? • Are there highways/ roadways that transverse certain neighborhoods? • Are there ways your community can be more environmentally just? What would that entail?

How do these three categories intersect? Write your notes below.



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4. Challenge and Solutions

How can we combat issues that prevent environmental justice for all?

How can members of society work together to do this?

Let's explore these issues using an example based on real events.

Background:

Oxnard is the largest city along California's Central Coast. The population is 85% people of color with nearly half of all adults having less than a high school education.

This low-income community ranks in the top 20% of the most environmentally burdened communities in the state because it is the location of many of the Central Coast's most polluting industries. There are three gas-fired power plants and an EPA Superfund hazardous waste site on the beaches of Oxnard.

In 2014, the largest power generation company in the United States proposed using Oxnard as a site for another gas-fired power plant.



Below are three different stakeholders in the scenario above. Each of these roles plays a part in the impact and the solution:

- **Environmental Engineers**
- **Oxnard Residents (possible cohorts - students, business owners, property owners, farmers)**
- **Lawmakers**
- **Power company representatives**

Take on the role of one of the stakeholders and react to the questions below. Share your findings with your classmates whom have taken on other roles.

- ***What are the benefits and the risks of locating this plant in Oxnard?***
- ***Are there other, more equitable solutions to this problem?***
- ***What should each group, individually, do in response to this proposal?***
- ***How can each group work with the other groups to create the best possible scenario for all the people in Oxnard?***

After you have completed this exercise, [watch this video](#) where Professor David Pellow speaks to the events at Oxnard. See what the residents did and what the outcome was.