
Humans and Fire

Adapted for Middle School



Purpose:

- This activity introduces students to the ways humans in the Pacific Northwest have used fire over time, the benefits and consequences their use of fire has had on the environment and their attitudes towards fire.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify, compare, and contrast how the Native Americans and European Settlers used fire.
- Describe the ecological benefits and consequences to using fire.
- Decide how humans today should use and react to fire.

Materials:

- Smokey Bear Poster (located in brown folder)
- Native American Use of Fire in the Landscape Interpretive Cards (7)
- Euro-American Use of Fire in the Landscape Interpretive Cards (7)
- Urban Wildland Interface Poster (rolled up in kit bin)
- Pencil and Paper (not provided)

Activity:

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Appropriate grades: 6-8

NGSS and Common Core Standards:

MS-LS2-4 Construct an argument supported by empirical evidence that changes to the physical or biological components of an ecosystem affects populations.

MS-LS2-5 Evaluate competing design solutions for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services.

8.21 Explain how historical technological developments (such as cotton gin, roads, railroads, canals, etc.), societal decisions, and personal practices interact with the physical environment in the United States (e.g., sustainability, economics ecosystems).

6-8.RH.3 Identify key steps in text's description of a process related to history/social studies.

6-8.WHST.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Introduction	Ask students how and when they use fire in their everyday lives. Show them the Smokey the Bear poster. Explain that this is a sign they will come across often in national parks and forests. Ask them to brainstorm all the possible messages the poster is trying to convey.
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	Why are humans being encouraged to prevent forest fires? What does that say about our attitudes towards fire?
Body	<p>Divide the class in half.</p> <p>Assign one half to read the Native American Use of Fire in the Landscape interpretive cards and the other half to read the Pioneer Use of Fire in the Landscape interpretive cards. As they read they should be taking note of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How was fire used by their assigned cultures? ● How did their use of fire affect the environment? <p>When students are done reading, have them do a think-pair share. If they read the Native American Use of fire in the Landscape interpretive card they will pair up with a student who read the Pioneer Use of Fire in the Landscape interpretive card. Together they will discuss, compare, and contrast the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the Native Americans used fire vs. how the Pioneers used fire. ● How the Native American use of fire affected the environment vs. how the Pioneer use of fire affected the environment.
Closure	<p>As a class, decide how humans today can use fire to maintain a healthy ecosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can humans use fire to help the environment? ● How can humans use fire to harm the environment? ● How can humans prevent forest fires?

Modifications

- For TAG learners you could have them research and identify how fire is used by humans today. Have them identify how their uses of fire help and harm the environment and propose solutions to minimize the negative effects of fire on the environment and society.

Additional Activities

- Take a field trip to a Siskiyou-Cascade National Monument or another fire-dependent field site to observe the effects wildfire has left on the land.

