

Human river

http://www.ccge.org/resources/learning_centre/classroom_activities/human_river.asp

Grade level: K-4 (Approximately age range: 5-9 years old)

Objectives: Through this activity, students will understand that rivers can be polluted and that students' actions can make a difference in the water quality of rivers.

Relevant U.S. National Geography Standards: 14, 16, 18

Materials: River system diagram

Procedure

Show students the river system diagram and discuss the different components. Ask them where they think they are located within a river system. Ask students to define litter. Have them name items of litter. List the items on the blackboard. Ask, What eventually happens to litter? Help students define 'pollutants' and name different pollutants. Where have students seen litter? Could litter or pollutants pose a problem for rivers?

Now, turn your class into a 'human river.' Have each student select one article (paper, book, pencil, etc.) to represent a pollutant. Arrange students in a river pattern. 'Tributary' students lead into a line of 'river' students, with an 'ocean' student at the end of the line. Beginning with students at the 'source,' have students pass their article to the next student, and so on, until the 'ocean' student holds everything. Students could say things such as, 'I'm a dairy farmer, and my fertilizer pollutes the river,' or 'I'm a power plant, and I'm heating the river water.' How did the students toward the middle and end feel?

Remind students that pollution comes in different forms and from different places, but it could all end up down a drain, where it threatens your river. Encourage students to get involved in keeping rivers clean.