

## Lesson 8: Whose Job Is It?

### NUTSHELL

*In this classroom lesson, students learn about stewardship and how their choices affect the future of forests by participating in a mock school board meeting. Students role-play to learn about different perspectives on forest management.*

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- All citizens have a responsibility to be stewards of the environment that sustains human life. This includes making informed decisions about forest resources.
- A citizen, acting individually or as part of a group, can make lifestyle decisions and take a variety of actions to ensure the sustainable use of our forests.
- Choices humans make today directly affect our ability to sustain forest ecosystems essential to meeting future needs.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How can citizens who don't own forests still be stewards of forests?

### OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain that citizens have a responsibility to be stewards of the environment.
- Explain that citizens can make decisions as individuals or as part of a group.
- Describe how choices people make affect the future of forests.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To be a **steward** of forests and other natural resources, citizens must accept responsibility to learn about the issues and problems that affect those resources. They must make decisions about the things people do to and for forests, and they must be willing to take action to correct things that may cause harm.

### SUBJECT AREAS

Language Arts, Social Studies

### LESSON/ACTIVITY TIME

**Total Lesson Time:** 70 minutes

- Introduction .....20 minutes
- Activity .....40 minutes
- Conclusion .....10 minutes

### STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

Standards for this lesson can be viewed online at the LEAF website ([www.leafprogram.org](http://www.leafprogram.org)).

Another aspect of forest stewardship is realizing that we all make a difference, no matter how small some efforts might seem. Individuals can be forest stewards and think with sustainability in mind even if they are not landowners. As members of organizations and communities, or as individuals, we have a stake in how our forests are **sustained**. We can influence how forests are managed by volunteering, raising funds, voting, participating in planning processes, and making conscious consumer choices. No matter the issue or action, decisions made today affect the future. It is important for students to understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens and consumers, so that they can make informed decisions and can positively influence the way we use and care for our forests and other natural resources.

## VOCABULARY TERMS

**Belief:** Something that a person thinks to be true to the best of his or her knowledge.

**Biodiversity:** The variety and complexity of all life on Earth.

**Knowledge:** The information or facts someone has about something.

**Steward:** A person who takes responsibility to make decisions and take actions today that will allow resources to be maintained in a healthy manner.

**Sustain:** To nourish, keep up, or maintain.

**Value:** The worth someone places on something.


How we view the environmental issues we take action on varies greatly. Our views depend on our knowledge, beliefs, and values. **Knowledge** is the information or facts someone has about something. **Beliefs** are what a person thinks to be true, based on his or her knowledge. A person may hold a belief to be true even though the belief may not be accurate. **Value** is the worth someone places on something. Values are based on beliefs and knowledge. As new knowledge is gained, often beliefs are refined and values may change. Knowledge, beliefs, and values, in turn, are determined by such things as our family and economic backgrounds, religion, level of education, and awareness of and interest in specific issues.

**“Between every two pines  
is a doorway to a new world.”**



★ John Muir ★

## MATERIALS LIST

### For Each Student

- Copy of Student Page  **2, My Role’s Viewpoint**

### For the Class

- Four copies of Student Page  **1A, Citizen Roles Cards** cut apart
- One copy of Student Page  **1B, Citizen Roles Cards** cut apart
- Several dictionaries

## PROCEDURE

### Introduction - Examples of Stewardship

1. Hand out dictionaries to several students. Ask each student to look up either “sustain” or “steward.” When students have found the definitions, ask them to read the definitions to the class. Summarize by reading these definitions to the class. (*Sustain: To nourish, keep up, or maintain. Steward: A person who takes responsibility to make decisions and take actions today that will allow resources to be maintained in a healthy manner.*)
2. Ask students who have babysat to raise their hands. Have them group with students who have not so that all students may participate in a discussion. (**NOTE:** If there are not enough students with babysitting experience, expand the question to pet sitting, plant watering, etc.)
3. Have groups discuss the following:
  - Describe a situation when you babysat.
  - Describe the responsibilities you had during that experience.
  - Describe any decisions you had to make during the experiences. (*I had to decide if I should answer the door or not.*)
4. After the groups have discussed their experiences, have them share with the class.

5. Explain to the students that when they were babysitting, they were responsible for the child's safety, food, happiness, etc. When they were babysitting, they were being stewards. Next, explain to students that while they were babysitting, they were helping sustain the child. The babysitter helped meet the child's needs now without compromising the child's future.
6. To show the connection between babysitting and forestry, ask students to go back with their group and answer the following questions.
  - What responsibilities do you think you have to take care of forests?
  - What responsibilities do you think you have to take care of forests so they are around for future generations?
7. Discuss their answers to these questions.
8. Discuss with students how they can be stewards of trees/forests around your school (e.g., school forest, trees in the schoolyard). (*Ideas might include picking up litter they see in the forest, putting up birdhouses for forest wildlife, etc.*) Now tell students they are going to learn about how one school had to make a decision about what to do in their school forest.

## Activity - Mock Meeting

1. Tell the class they are going to be part of a mock school board meeting. Set up the room with a row of tables or desks in front, facing the rest of the room, for four school board members.
2. Read the issue summary at the top of the next column to the class.
3. Pass out cards made from Student Pages **1A-B, Citizen Roles Cards** one per student in the class. (**NOTE:** There are enough roles for a class of 25. Remove or add group members to meet the needs of your class. There must be one Silent Citizen.)

Have students read their character description to become familiar with the point of view of their character without discussing with the rest of the class. Remind students they are characters, not themselves. The characters may not know as much as the student actually does, but the students need to stick to their character. Make sure the student who is going to be Sloan Late, the Silent Citizen, understands not to speak at the meeting until after the board has voted.

4. Hand out Student Page **2, My Role's Viewpoint**, to each student. Ask students to fill out the page based on the information on their Citizen Roles Card. Once students have thought about their role, move on to the meeting.
5. Have students with the role of school board members take the four seats in the front of the room.
6. Begin by explaining that the board has already met about other business. They are now ready to begin hearing the opinions about the issue the citizens have come about. Have the citizens who have come to the meeting stand and tell the board their concerns and comments. (Except Sloan Late.)
  - a. Each position should only be read once. Not all students will get to speak.
  - b. Make sure a member of each group is read: students, neighborhood organization, "Taxpayers Together," and "We Love Trees."
  - c. Make sure individuals 1, 2, 3, and 4 are read.

### Issue Summary

The school board is considering cutting and selling trees in the school forest. The harvest is described in the forest management plan that the school forest has. The money earned will help balance the school district's budget.

7. After the citizens have given their opinions, the board should discuss any of the points they feel are important and vote on whether to proceed with the harvest or not. They should announce that decision to the whole group.
8. After the decision is made, the student assigned to be community member Sloan Late (the Silent Citizen), should present his or her side of the issue. Discuss how the information Sloan had would have affected the decision the school board made. *(The board may have voted to harvest if they decided not to harvest in the vote. It may not have changed the vote.)*
9. Define and discuss knowledge, beliefs, and values.
  - **Knowledge:** The information or facts someone has about something.
  - **Belief:** Something that a person thinks to be true to the best of his or her knowledge.
  - **Value:** The worth someone places on something.
10. Ask a member of each group or an individual to identify the knowledge, beliefs, or values that influenced his or her opinion.
11. Discuss how the information Sloan had might have changed the opinions of the groups at the meeting. *(“We Love Trees” may have decided that cutting was actually helping and might have decided that this would be a good idea to save the rare ecosystem. The “Taxpayers Together” group may not have changed their minds at all.)* Discuss what can happen when people don’t take action. *(Information is not complete, someone’s opinion may get overlooked, the “squeaky wheel” could get more attention than is deserved.)* Begin a discussion by asking students if all the individuals/groups were being good stewards. Define steward again if necessary. *(Answers will vary, but all individuals/groups did take responsibility and action, two keys to stewardship.)*

## Conclusion - Getting Information

Have students write down at least five questions they would like to have had answered before they would make a decision about the town meeting issue. What additional information did the students know that they would have said if they had been speaking for themselves instead of their character? What decision would they have made and why? Discuss these questions as a class. Discuss why becoming informed is the first part of making a good decision. Ask students if they think an issue like this might ever happen at their school.

## CAREERS

The career profile in this lesson is about Terrie Cooper, Associate Director, Door County Land Trust, and is found on page 144. Use this profile to enhance the lesson and/or use it with the special careers lesson on page 148.

## SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Assign students to create a list of five things they do now that have either a positive or negative impact on forests for the long-term. They should include an explanation about how their actions impact forests. **NOTE:** If a local forest issue is available, an alternative would be to investigate it and have students explain how they might become involved.

## NOTES

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## Career Profile

### Terrie Cooper, Door County Land Trust Director

This is Terrie Cooper. Terrie is the Director of Land Protection and Stewardship for the Door County Land Trust. A land trust gives people a way to protect their land from inappropriate development that could harm the unique plants and animals that live there.

Terrie's job is to go to the places that a landowner wants to protect and talk about what options are available. Once the land is protected, she might take pictures, inventory plants and animals, or take other people to see these unique places. She might also write articles for newspapers, count different types of birds, build trails, plant trees, and work with people who volunteer to help.

Terrie went to college and studied to be a teacher and also studied biology and conservation. Later, she got her master's degree in Natural Resource Management and Environmental Education. Terrie has had lots of different experiences. She helped to start a land trust where she used to live and volunteered to help run it. Terrie has worked as a naturalist at many of the nature centers in Wisconsin — from Milwaukee to Green Bay to Eagle River.

Terrie says her favorite part of her job is "seeing the beautiful places I have helped to permanently protect that will always be here for future generations of

people and wildlife to enjoy." She says she likes to be able to combine her love for teaching about nature with her love for being outdoors.

If you would like a job like Terrie's, she says you should try to learn about the plants, animals, and the history of the community around you. She suggests that you should learn about how your town makes decisions and maybe even go to a meeting to see how it is done. Don't forget to volunteer for a conservation organization in your area, doing things like planting trees, building birdhouses, cleaning up litter, or helping raise money for them.



***Terrie visits the places she protects. Sometimes they are rivers and lakes.***

## CITIZEN ROLES CARDS

**Make four copies  
of this page.**

### **School Board Member**

Your role is to listen to the comments and arguments made by the citizens and decide what you think should be done. You will vote at the end of the meeting for what you think should be done.

### **Member of Neighborhood Organization**

I am a member of a neighborhood organization. We are a group concerned about issues that will impact our quality of life and property values.

Since the school forest is near our subdivision, we don't want the harvesting going on. We feel it will lower our property values, and we don't want all that noise and commotion.

### **Member of Group of Students**

I am a student. A group of us have come because we are concerned that the harvest will mean we won't be able to go on the field trip we planned. We came to make sure the school board remembers that the educational value of the school forest is just as important as the money from the harvest. If education and harvest can be done at the same time, I'm okay with the harvest.

### **Member of "Taxpayers Together"**

I am a member of a group called "Taxpayers Together." We are a group of citizens concerned about rising taxes. We try to bring attention to issues that we feel are important to all taxpayers.

We want the harvest because we think that the forest should provide income to help lessen the taxes we pay.

### **Member of "We Love Trees"**

I am a member of the group "We Love Trees." We are a tree preservation group. We believe that humans should have little or no impact on the forests of Wisconsin.

We don't want the harvest because we think that the forest should be left alone. The group thinks that natural succession in a forest without human actions is best.

## CITIZEN ROLES CARDS

**Make one copy  
of this page.**

### **Individual 1**

I am a parent and I came to the meeting because my daughter said that the school board was going to cut down all the trees around the school and I don't want that to happen.

### **Individual 2**

I am a parent and I came to the meeting because I work for a small local furniture maker. I want the harvest because it would be a good supply of wood to use to make furniture. I need a good supply of wood to keep my job.

### **Individual 3**

I am a parent and I came to the meeting because my son said that the school board was going to cut down trees. I have a degree in forestry and want to learn more about the management plan you have. The management plan will help me understand what you want to do.

### **Individual 4**

I am a parent and I came to the meeting because my daughter and son said that the school board was going to cut down the trees in the school forest. When I was in fourth grade, my class planted those trees.

### **Silent Citizen - Sloan Late** *(Say this AFTER the board votes)*

I am Sloan Late. I live in town. I don't like to cause a fuss, so I didn't comment during the meeting. Now that the board has voted, I want to tell you about a conversation I had with my daughter who lives in Minnesota.

My daughter is an ecologist and is studying biodiversity and ecosystems. She told me that the school forest was historically an oak savannah ecosystem. They are uncommon now in Wisconsin because much of the land that once had oak savannahs on it is now farmland or subdivisions. An oak savannah provides habitat for different animals and has different plants than other forests.

My daughter thinks that a harvest would be a great first step in restoring this rare ecosystem. It would be a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about biodiversity.

## MY ROLE'S VIEWPOINT

### A. Why my viewpoint is the "right" one.

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### B. What other people may think of my viewpoint.

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### C. How may I respond to what other people think?

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