

SECTION ONE: Project/Lesson Overview

Grades: 10 and 12

Subjects: French (10231-10232), Geography – Contemporary World Issues (41411)

Lesson Title: Taking a Stand (Opinion Letters)

Themes: Current issues: natural resources and sources of renewable and non-renewable energies in New Brunswick; history of natural resources exploration

Lesson Description and Objectives:

The current issues facing New Brunswick related to non-renewable energy sources, and in particular “fracking,” have been very prominent in the media lately.

Who are the key players in the debates? What are their points of view and reasons for their opinions? How could these issues affect citizens in our province?

Using information available on the “Magnificent Rocks” website, as well as the numerous articles and reports on natural resource exploration in New Brunswick, students will form and express their opinion on issues in a hypothetical letter to the Department of Natural Resources, taking into consideration the various points of view on the topic.

Time Required: Two to three 60-minute periods

Learning Outcomes:

(French)

Convince a target audience of the value of a product (cultural or other) or validity of an opinion using sound, clearly presented arguments.

- Take the audience into account.
- State the intent of the communication.
- Provide a sufficient number of relevant arguments designed to convince the audience.
- Structure the opinion letter and follow the proper format (date, recipient’s name and address, salutation, body, valediction, signature).
- Express feelings.
- Elaborate on the topic using various categories and types of arguments (rational: facts, examples, statistics; non-rational: feelings, values, emotions; authoritative: citations from experts, study reports, etc.).
- Present arguments in a logical order so as to effectively convey the message.
- Use an appropriate tone.

(Geography)

Interpret a local issue on the planetary level.

- Describe the aspects of the local issue on a planetary level.
- Explain the power relationships existing between the stakeholders in the issue and their repercussions.
- Justify a vision of the local issue on the planetary level.

Develop civic awareness on a planetary level.

- Show how the countries of the world depend on one another.
- Critically review the solutions advanced for managing an issue.
- Argue in favour of a solution to an issue.

(Transdisciplinary)

Communication: *Communicate clearly in correct and appropriate language according to the given context.*

- Defend opinions, justify points of view and articulate thoughts clearly and concisely whether discussing an abstract or concrete topic.

Critical thinking: *Demonstrate capacity for critical analysis and creative thinking in solving problems and making individual and collective decisions.*

- Distinguish between opinion, fact, inference, bias, stereotype and persuasive force; base arguments on information gathered from multiple sources.

SECTION TWO: Project/Lesson Implementation

Equipment/Materials Required:

- Computers with access to the Internet and to the “Magnificent Rocks” website
- Access to news articles

Lesson Procedures/Teaching Strategies:

1- Start a class discussion on energy needs throughout the world, the relationship between the territories which produce and those which consume energy, and the dependence on energy this can create.

2- Introduce the subject of natural resources in New Brunswick and how these resources have been developed.

- *Why do you think that a society would try to develop and use its own natural resources?*
- *What energy sources can you think of that are available in New Brunswick?*

- Are these resources mainly renewable (wood, solar, hydroelectric, etc.) or non-renewable (oil, coal, natural gas, etc.)?

3- Using the information available on the “Magnificent Rocks” website, students will familiarize themselves with information about non-renewable resources in New Brunswick and, in particular, oil and natural gas:

- The formation of oil shales that are now producing oil and gas in southern New Brunswick

- Oil-producing regions and their development

- The discovery of shales containing natural gas

- The companies actively exploring these resources in NB (Corridor Resources, among others)

- The process of extracting natural gas from shales (stimulation of hydraulic fracturing: an illustration showing the process is available on the site)

4- Once they have explored the “Magnificent Rocks” website, begin a discussion with the students about current issues related to developing fracking in New Brunswick. Reading various articles on the subject that have appeared in the media should be encouraged; this will help them form a bigger picture of the current situation (see *Supplementary Resources*).

- Based on the information shared in the media, consider different points of view on this particular issue and the position taken by these key players:

- The vision of “growth and prosperity” of those who promote this resource (economy)

- The reasons put forth by the government to develop fracking and the debate this has generated during New Brunswick’s election campaigns

- The groups that protest against development of this resource and their demonstrations

5- To enable students to support, express, and defend a point of view with valid arguments, and to recognize different methods they can use to make their opinions known, students will write an opinion letter about the current issues related to hydraulic fracking in New Brunswick.

This letter will (hypothetically) be addressed to the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and should take into consideration the potential economic, social, political, and environmental repercussions of short and long-term positions on different levels.

Ideally, students will support their opinions and arguments with facts found through research on the “Magnificent Rocks” website and other credible sources.

Suggested Assessment Strategies:

Students will be assessed on their ability to write an opinion letter in which they consider their recipients and follow the structure and form of this type of letter.

Another consideration for assessment should be the clarity of the expression of their opinions and the respect they show for other possible points of view.

The student should be able to develop a number of arguments, choose an effective order to present them, use expressive language, and use proper grammar and spelling.

Vocabulary:

- Natural resources
- Non-renewable energy source
- Oil shales
- Hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”)

SECTION THREE: Project/Lesson Resources

Supplementary Resources:

Magnificent Rocks:

http://www.nbm-mnb.ca/magnificent_rocks-roches_magnifiques/home-accueil-eng/

Radio-Canada (shale gas issue):

<http://ici.radio-canada.ca/sujet/enjeuxdugazdeschiste>

New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources:

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/natural_resources.html

Disclaimer:

The online resources recommended in this document have been selected according to their relevance in terms of the age and grade level of the students. However, given that the content of online materials is subject to change at any time, teachers are advised to consult the websites before recommending them to their students.

Extension/Enrichment:

- One idea for an additional activity is to have students exchange letters to learn more about their peers’ ideas and strategies. Imagining themselves as the Minister of Natural Resources reading another student’s letter and replying to it could also be an interesting exercise.
- If the student has strong convictions and feelings about his or her opinion and really wants the government to see it, sending the letter to the Department should be encouraged.

SECTION FOUR: Additional Information

Credits: Sophie Auffrey and Sara Waitzer