

Voices of the Earth: Art for Sustainability Awareness

Duration	Age	Difficulty
60 min (2-3 sessions)	13-14	Medium
#STEAMexpression #InclusiveDesign		

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, students become environmental storytellers. Through personal or collaborative visual artworks, they explore a pressing sustainability issue that matters to them—locally or globally. Their goal: raise awareness and move others to care.

Students may work with mixed media (drawing, painting, collage) or digital tools (e.g., Canva, GIMP) to produce a compelling art piece supported by an artist statement. Works are presented in a class or virtual exhibition and include tributes to women or gender-diverse leaders in the field of sustainability.

KEY COMPETENCES (EU)

- Cultural Awareness and Expression
- Digital Competence
- Citizenship
- Learning to Learn
- Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- **Understand and communicate sustainability challenges** through visual storytelling.
- **Apply symbolic, cultural, and emotional expression** to advocate for change.
- **Highlight the contributions of women and gender-diverse environmental leaders.**
- **Receive and give constructive feedback** to refine ideas and design.
- **Share and reflect** on how art can spark civic and ecological action.

MATERIALS



●	Provided by students
●	Provided by the teacher/institution
●	Downloadable Elements



PREVIOUS PREPARATION

- Organize student groups or individual work paths.
- Choose and share 3-5 examples of impactful environmental art.
- Briefly introduce the SDGs and how art can influence behavior.
- Ensure accessibility for both digital and analog options.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND ADAPTATION

Environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change, deforestation, and overconsumption are pressing issues that directly impact students' futures. However, traditional teaching often fails to emotionally engage young learners with these abstract topics. Try a different approach. Introduce the topic with a question: "Have you noticed how the climate is changing where we live?" or "Do you think a painting or poster can change someone's mind?"

This activity uses **art as a lens** to connect students to **sustainability in a personal, cultural, and expressive way**. By asking "What would the Earth say if it could speak through you?", students are invited to **become the voice of nature**, turning environmental awareness into a **creative, reflective, and civic act**.

- **Activate emotional engagement with sustainability challenges.**
- **Empower underrepresented voices, especially women and gender-diverse people in environmental leadership.**
- **Encourage cultural reflection, connecting sustainability to the students' heritage or local context.**
- **Frame artistic creation as a form of activism and communication.**

Remember that you have the option to complement this theoretical part with the following boxes depending on the dynamics you choose:

Digital resources:

Show students a short video about global pollution to catch their attention: [Air, Water and Land Pollution](#)

Classroom activity

Display images of polluted vs preserved land. Ask students: Which one do you want for your future?

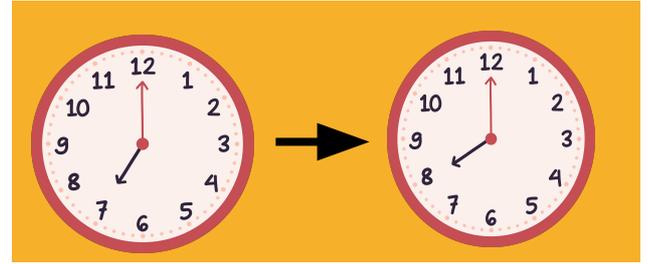
Note for the teacher

If you're teaching in a region heavily affected by environmental stress, encourage students to use their own community's story as the base of their project. For digital learners, invite photo sharing or visual boards as some form of storytelling spaces.



ACTIVITY

This activity will be composed of three 1h sessions.



TEAM SETUP (5 min)

Once the students are organised in teams, assign rotating roles:

- **Researcher** (gathers stories or context)
- **Visual Designer** (leads sketching or layout)
- **Presenter** (presents ideas in debate or exhibition)

Each student must rotate roles at least once. This ensures every voice is included and respected in the process.

The activity is composed of 7 phases:

1. Introduction & contextualization (15-20 min. approx.)
2. Topic selection & research (30-40 min. approx.)
3. Concept development (20-30 min. approx.)
4. Artistic creation (40-60 min. approx.)
5. Peer feedback (20 min. approx.)
6. Exhibition & debate (40 min. approx.)
7. Reflection (5-10 min. approx.)

1. Introduction & contextualization:

The objective of this phase is to engage students emotionally and intellectually with the theme of sustainability through real-world context and artistic purpose.

The teacher will present the topic with a question, then proceed to show example on the projector and ask students about their opinion and emotions on these pictures.

Then, the teacher will divide the classroom in two groups, art defenders vs skeptics, and debate openly. In the end, ask students about their opinions after hearing the debate.





2. Topic selection & research:

The objective of this phase is helping students choose a sustainability issue and collect data, stories, or images related to it.

The teacher does a brainstorming session with the students using google slides for visual support.

Then, the teacher asks the students to answer these questions::

- What is the problem?
- Who is affected?
- What change do you want to see?



Cultural connexion

As an extra step students can also ask a family member how they approached sustainability in the past (e.g., food, waste, water use). What's different from your topic? What wisdom might still be relevant?

3. Concept development:

The objective of this phase is to begin planning the artwork visually and conceptually.

The students choose a digital art format: collage, poster, illustration, comic, etc. Then they will try to create a draft sketch, and write a title with 2–3 sentences to explain the idea.

Fill out the following structure to develop your concept:

- Symbol: What does this represent?
- Message: What do I want people to feel or do?
- Tribute: Which eco-leader or figure will be included?



Equity Challenge (Optional)

Imagine your artwork must reach a person who:

- Has limited internet access
- Lives in a community most affected by the issue you have chosen

What would you change about your message, format, or visuals to make it more impactful for them?



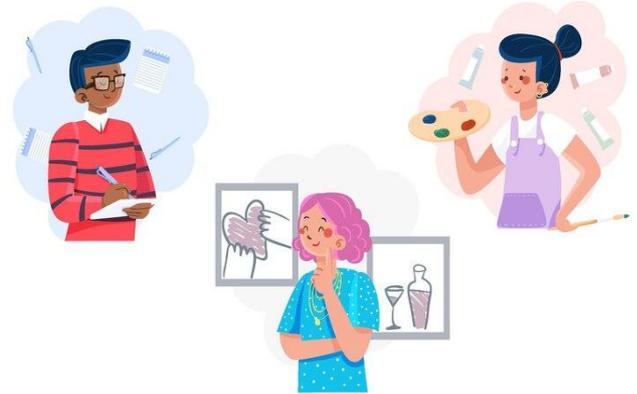
4. Artistic creation:

The objective of this phase is for students to produce the final artwork and artist statement.

The students will finalize the creative art piece using digital tools like photoshop, canva, illustrator, capcut or any other design app.

Then, they will write a 100-150 word artist statement that includes:

- Problem chosen
- Artistic intention
- Emotional or cultural symbolism
- Tribute to a woman environmental leader
- Include what barriers (social, political, gender-based) did she face, and how did she overcome them? Do you think these barriers still exist today?



5. Peer feedback:

The objective of this phase is to refine the artwork and message through constructive peer input.

The teacher will use the projector to show the final art pieces. Students will watch their peers' work and give constructive criticism based on:

- Something powerful about the message.
- Something effective in the artwork.
- One suggestion for improvement or clarity.



Mini-Debate (5 min): Can Art Change the World?

Then, the teacher starts a debate to analyze the limits and strengths of media tools for change. Questions for the students:

- Can a digital image or poster really influence someone's behavior?
- When might it fail?



6. Exhibition & debate:

The objective of this phase is to present and analyze the artworks and messages through student-led discussion.

The teacher will print and display the artwork in the classroom or in a hallway.

Then, will split the students into small groups and assign them roles:

- Art advocates: argue that awareness must come first.
- Action advocates: argue that action matters more than expression.
- Synthesizers: argue that both are equally needed and reinforce each other.

Each group has a 1 minute visual explanation, a 2 minute argument, and a response to another team.



Upgrading step:

Add **captions** or translate your artist statement into another language used in your class

7. Reflection:

The objective of this phase is to deepen the student reflection and internalize learning.

The teacher will use the projector to show the students some questions and do a final reflection of the activity:

- How did your perspective on environmental issues change through this activity?
- What role can young people like us play in making change?
- Who inspired you most from the leaders we studied?





CONCLUSION AND SHARING

To close the activity, send the students an additional homework for further reflection on their own time. You will make them write a letter to their future self asking: "What will you do to protect Earth in the next 10 years?"



You can share the project social media if any teachers want to share with us their results using the following sentence and template with the links:

Don't forget to take a photo of your experience and share it with us!



[LinkedIn](#)



[Instagram](#)



[X](#)

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Canva.com
Pixlr.com
Freepik.es

