

PEN PALS

- Grade Level: 7-8
- Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts
- Suggested Time: 1 class period, plus 1 period when letters arrive



Learn about energy saving and recycling programs in the schools of other countries through correspondence.

Materials

World map or globe, paper and pens/pencils, or computers with email set up for students; internet and/or library access (optional); Pen Pals Writing Guidelines; materials for reviewing how to write a friendly letter.

National Standards

Language Arts:

- Reading for perspective.
- Evaluation strategies.
- Communication skills.
- Communication strategies.
- Applying knowledge.
- Multicultural understanding.
- Participating in society.

Social Studies:

- The world in spatial terms.
- Places and regions.
- Environment and society.
- The uses of geography.

Ohio 2010 Standards

Language Arts:

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (7, 8)
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (7, 8)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (7, 8)

- Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences. (7, 8)
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. (7, 8)

Social Studies:

- The ability to understand individual and group perspectives is essential to analyzing historic and contemporary issues. (7)
- The variability in the distribution of productive resources in the various regions of the world contributed to specialization, trade, and interdependence. (7)
- The availability of natural resources contributed to the geographic and economic expansion of the United States, sometimes resulting in unintended environmental consequences. (8)

Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Write a friendly letter to an international pen pal.
- Describe what he/she is learning about energy and environmental issues.
- Write questions asking the pen pal about energy and environmental issues in his/her country.
- Read and respond in writing to letters from a pen pal.

Teacher Preparation

- Many countries are more advanced in energy conservation technology and recycling than the United States. Have your students correspond with pen pals about their environment, recycling and energy efficiency using e-mail, or regular mail. Use the following web site to find pen pals for your students: http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu_penpals.php.
- Contact potential pen pals' teacher(s) and inform them that your class is studying energy and environmental issues. Try to find teacher(s) who are interested in helping students learn about energy and environmental issues as well.
- Arrange for students to use email or regular mail to correspond with pen pals.
- Once the pen pals are selected, you may wish to teach or collaborate with a social studies teacher on a lesson or unit about the pen pals' country.

Introduction

- Ask students if they've ever had a pen pal. What did they learn about other places from the pen pal?
- Tell students they will be writing to pen pals and identify their country. Explain that many countries have different approaches to energy and water conservation and recycling. Their correspondence will include some discussion about energy and environmental issues.

Activities

- Ask students to identify the pen pals' country on a map or globe.
- Ask students what they know about this country. What would they like to know?
- Review how to write a friendly letter.
- Distribute the Pen Pals Writing Guidelines and go over as a class. Remind students of recent lessons they may write about. Encourage students to further research the topic of their choice before writing.
- Give students time to write the letters. Allow time to type letters, if desired.
- Screen letters and grade (if desired) before sending.
- When the pen pals' letters arrive, give students time to read and discuss the letters. Then remind students to answer all the pen pals' questions in their response, as well as asking new questions. Make sure to do additional research if needed to answer the question.
- Allow students time to find answers to the pen pals' questions, if needed. Students may use the internet, textbooks, library books, or materials from previous lessons.

Extensions

- The teacher may set up a Skype session or other distance learning opportunity with the pen pals.
- Do a Social Studies unit on the pen pals' country. Students may do presentations or projects on different aspects of the country.

Closing

Ask students to share one energy or environmental idea they have learned from their pen pals.

Worksheet

Pen Pals Writing Guidelines



Pen Pals Writing
Guidelines
