

Additional Resources: Ethical Consumerism

MARL hopes that through a meaningful conversation regarding consumption patterns, students will be better able to embody a critical perception of the world around them. When talking about consumption, we acknowledge that there are different considerations that must be made surrounding access to wealth and ultimately choice.

We acknowledge that there is privilege that comes with being able to consider what it means to be an ethical consumer, as this choice often happens only once individuals are equipped with knowledge of how their purchases impact others, the ability to choose oftentimes more expensive alternatives, and the time to source out ethical alternatives to mainstream consumption habits.

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The Story of Stuff

The Story of Stuff Project's journey began with a 20-minute film about the way we make, use and throw away all the Stuff in our lives. It has now turned into a worldwide community, working to build a healthier and more just planet.

<http://storyofstuff.org/>

Scientific American: Harvesting Palm Oil

This article outlines the damaging industry of palm oil production – the largest cause of deforestation in Indonesia and other equatorial countries with dwindling expanses of tropical rainforest.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/harvesting-palm-oil-and-rainforests/>

The Good Shopping Guide

This website reveals the good, the bad, and the ugly of the world's companies and brands, assisting consumers in choosing more eco-friendly and ethical products that support the growth of social responsibility and ethical business.

<http://www.thegoodshoppingguide.com/>

Ethical Consumer

The main goal of *Ethical Consumer* is to make global businesses more sustainable through consumer pressure. The five key elements of their mission are helping consumers challenge corporate power, democratizing the market, transparency of research, letting companies know why we choose to consume from them or not, and wider political action.

www.ethicalconsumer.org

Repair Café Toronto

Repair Café Toronto is a grassroots, volunteer group that organizes events where neighbours help neighbours learn how to repair.

<http://repaircafetoronto.ca/>

Conscious consumerism is a lie

Alden Wicker outlines challenges conscious consumers to go beyond ethical consumption choices and instead engage meaningfully in sociopolitical change. "So if you really care about the environment, climb on out of your upcycled wooden chair and get yourself to a town hall meeting."

<https://qz.com/920561/conscious-consumerism-is-a-lie-heres-a-better-way-to-help-save-the-world/>

How is the world divided? Activity

From Equitas Play it Right toolkit

Age: Grades 7-9

Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

Photocopies of world maps or large pieces of paper to draw on for each group

Markers

Instructions:

Divide children into 3 or 4 teams, and ask each team to draw a map of the world that identifies the major continents (or, distribute a map to each team). Ask the children to imagine 100 children (like at a day camp, for example) Then ask them the following question, If 100 children represent the population of the world, how many children would there be in the following regions? Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and Central and South America?

Ask them to discuss this question with their team until they reach an agreement on the numbers. Each team must then write the numbers in the areas of their maps of the world. When all teams have finished, ask the children to show their map to the rest of the group and explain how they arrived at their answers.

Next, show the children your map of the world with the correct answers:

56 in Asia

23 in Africa

9 in Europe

8 South and Central Americans

4 North Americans

Debrief (adapted by MARL):

Were the number estimates accurate? Why do you think we perceive the population to be divided as we did?

Is it important to consider how other people in the world are impacted by things we buy?

Discuss with the participants that when we talk about ethical consumerism, we must also be conscious of the many people around the world who play a part in the production or distribution of the items we purchase.

String Activity

From Fairtrade Foundation's *Fairtrade Schools*

Age: Grades 5-8

Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

Cut outs of the roles (on following page)

Ball of string

Instructions:

A group of 10 students stands in a circle with others observing – give each person one role which they read out to the rest of the group. One holds the end of the string and passes the ball to someone that they 'link' with (for instance, the factory owner might be linked to the supermarket or the businessman). They explain why they feel related to the other person.

This person then chooses another that they are linked to and passes the string on, keeping hold of the string themselves. After sometime there will be a web of string across the circle.

Ask: What does this web show us about the production of chocolate?

Then tell the group there has been a drought or disease affecting cocoa farmers, and get the farmers to wiggle the string. The whole web should move, showing that everyone is affected. Ask individual characters how they would be impacted by the drought or disease. Discuss how interconnected people are in the production of materials and how if farmers and those directly involved in the production of the good or material have negative things happen in their lives, it impacts the whole production chain.

A cocoa farmer in Côte d'Ivoire
A chocoholic
The director of a Fairtrade chocolate company
A businesswoman who buys cocoa in Africa and imports it to Canada
The owner of a big chocolate factory that makes some Fairtrade bars
A Fairtrade cocoa farmer in Ghana
Someone who eats chocolate biscuits every day
The manager of a supermarket that makes and sells chocolate biscuits
The owner of a corner shop
A truck driver in Ghana who transports cocoa from farms to the port