

Activity 2



PURPOSE: To encourage students to think about the way people use natural resources, and to explore more environmentally friendly sources of energy.

TIME: Several periods of class time for students' research; one or two periods for presentations, depending on number of groups

METHOD:

People who use trees or agricultural crops for fuel, cooking or heating their homes, are using biomass (organic) energy. Wood can be a renewable energy source as long as trees are replaced as they are used. However, it can take many years for forests to grow back (compared to the short period of time required to harvest forest resources).

Other kinds of energy are wind, water, solar and nuclear. Some of these sources of energy are renewable, others are not. Wind and solar power are thought to be the most environmentally friendly sources because they are (where it is possible to use them) virtually limitless forms of energy. What could be more "renewable"? The sun comes up every day!

Divide students into groups and assign each group one form of energy to research. They should focus on its benefits and drawbacks. Ask them to focus particularly on how the use of the form of energy they'll be researching impacts on the environment. Each group takes turns presenting a commercial on why their form of energy is the best. Afterwards, have the group tell the class what they chose not to include in the commercial (i.e., the negative environmental effects of this type of energy).



HOW DO WE DECIDE THE VALUE OF A 700 YEAR OLD TREE? WE NEED ONLY TO ASK HOW MUCH IT WOULD COST TO MAKE A NEW ONE, OR A NEW RIVER, OR EVEN A NEW ATMOSPHERE.