

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Water Fights Present Dangerous Challenges in Coming Decades, 3/20/2009

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june09/water_03-20.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. How much of the water in the world is drinkable?

2. Why is water important?

3. Name three ways you used water today.

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. Name 3 global changes that affect water distribution.

ANSWER

Global changes - such as population growth, rapid urbanization, global migration, land use changes, and global warming - create competing pressures on this finite resource. As a result, the amount of water available for each person is increasingly unequal and diminishing dramatically.

2. What may happen by 2030 according to the OECD report?

ANSWER

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development said that by 2030, half the world's population could be struggling to find clean water.

3. When is World Water Day?

ANSWER

The forum culminates with World Water Day on March 22, an international holiday created in 1992 by the United Nations and first celebrated in 1993.

4. What was the World Water Forum theme this year? What does it mean?

ANSWER

The forum's theme of transboundary waters focuses on water that is shared between nation states and impacts more 45 percent of the land surface of the world.

More than 75 percent of all countries, 145 in total, have shared river basins: land drained by a river or tributary that flows into or out of another country.

5. What countries and territories share water from the Jordan River?

ANSWER

Israel, Jordan, Palestine Syria and Lebanon share the waters of the Jordan River and attempts to use the water for different projects by different countries have resulted in constant friction.

6. How much water does each Palestinian consume according to Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas?

ANSWER

Palestinians had four times less water per capita than people living in Israel, a consumption level far below the World Health Organization's guidelines for minimum daily access to water.

7. Why is there more competition for water in Darfur?

ANSWER

In Africa, rainfall in northern Darfur has decreased by a third over the last 80 years, increasing competition for water between tribes, according to a 2007 United Nations Environmental Program report.

"Exponential population growth and related environmental stress have created the conditions for conflicts to be triggered and sustained by political, tribal or ethnic differences," the report said, adding that Darfur "can be considered a tragic example of the social breakdown that can result from ecological collapse."

8. How many people in Africa do not have access to sanitation?

ANSWER

Half a billion people in Africa lack access to adequate sanitation, and 5,000 children die daily from diarrhea, a disease that can be prevented with clean water, according to the United Nations.

9. Name two lakes in the United States that are shrinking and cannot provide water to the urban populations nearby?

ANSWER

In 2009, Shasta Lake, California's biggest reservoir, stands less than a third full because melting snow that fed it for six decades is dwindling, forcing water rationing in affected areas.

Meanwhile, the desert city of Las Vegas is frantically digging in the desert to tap into water from the shrinking Lake Mead in the Colorado River Basin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Do you think that people should be able to own water and sell it to others? Why or why not?

2. How can water be more evenly distributed around the globe?

3. Where do you think the next water war might happen? Why?

4. California has a long history of water disputes, what can be done to change that? Can it be changed?

5. Research where you get your water from. Does this surprise you?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.