

Clean Earth, Responsible People
Caring for Nature and Our Shared Future

LESSON PLAN

1. Theme: Me, My Community, and the Planet

Environmental Protection, Ecology, Sustainable Living, Responsibility

2. Grade: 5th Grade (10–11 years old)

3. Target Group: Students of Islamic background living in Greece, in a multicultural classroom environment

4. Lesson Type: Lesson for acquiring new knowledge, developing environmental awareness, and building responsible attitudes toward nature

5. Duration: 45 minutes

6. Basic Terms: environment, nature, ecosystem, pollution, recycling, waste, climate, water, air, soil, energy, responsibility, sustainability, biodiversity, protect, conserve, future generations

7. Pedagogical Methods: Guided discussion, Inquiry-based learning, Visual learning, Cooperative learning, Case examples, Reflection and values-based learning, Intercultural dialogue

8. Teaching Aids (Means)

Board / interactive board

Projector and PPT slides

World map (physical & environmental)

Pictures of ecosystems (forest, sea, city, farmland)

Recycling symbols and waste images

Worksheets

Short informational texts (adapted from children's encyclopedias)

Colored cards (green / red)

9. Goals

Educational Goals

Students will learn to:

- ✓ Understand what the environment is and why it is important
- ✓ Identify major environmental problems (pollution, waste, climate change)
- ✓ Explain how human actions affect nature
- ✓ Recognize the connection between nature and human health
- ✓ Learn simple actions that protect the environment

Formational Goals

Students will learn to:

- ✓ Take responsibility for their daily actions
- ✓ Respect nature as a shared home

- ✓ Develop care for local and global environments
- ✓ Understand environmental protection as a universal human value
- ✓ Appreciate cultural and religious perspectives on caring for the Earth

10. Cross-Curricular Connections

Science (Ecology, Earth Science)

Geography (Natural environments, Greece and the world)

Citizenship Education

Ethics / Values Education

Religious & Cultural Studies (contextual, non-instructional)

11. Expected Results

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- ✓ Define “environment” in their own words
- ✓ Name at least three environmental problems
- ✓ Explain how pollution affects humans and animals
- ✓ Identify environmentally friendly behaviors
- ✓ Describe why caring for nature is a shared responsibility
- ✓ Show respect for different cultural views on nature

12. Preparation for the Teacher

The teacher prepares:

PPT with images of clean vs polluted environments

Short adapted informational texts (see section 16)

Worksheets

Visual symbols for recycling and energy saving

Clear examples related to students' everyday life in Greece (sea, cities, villages, water use)

13. Structure of the Lesson

A. Introduction – Visual Trigger & Discussion (6 minutes)

Teacher shows two pictures:

A clean beach in Greece

A polluted beach with plastic waste

Guided Questions:

What differences do you see?

How would you feel visiting each place?

Who is responsible for these environments?

Transition:

“Today we will learn how our actions affect the Earth and how we can protect our shared home.”

CORE CONCEPTS – THEORY

Teacher’s Theoretical Notes

The environment includes all the natural elements that make life on Earth possible. These elements are air, water, land, plants, animals, and human beings. People do not live outside the environment; they are an essential part of it. Every human activity—such as building cities, producing food, traveling, and using energy—affects the natural world in some way. The Earth functions as a connected system. When one part of the environment is damaged, other parts are affected as well. For example, pollution in rivers does not stay only in the water. It harms fish, plants, birds, and eventually people who depend on clean water for drinking and food. Understanding this connection helps students realize that environmental protection is not only about nature but also about human health and well-being.

An ecosystem is a place where living organisms (plants, animals, and humans) interact with non-living elements such as water, soil, air, and sunlight. Forests, seas, mountains, cities, and farms are all examples of ecosystems. Each ecosystem has a natural balance that allows life to continue. When this balance is disturbed, serious problems can occur. Cutting too many trees can lead to soil erosion and loss of animal habitats. Polluting the sea with plastic can harm marine animals and damage fishing activities that many families depend on. Students should understand that ecosystems are fragile and require responsible care to remain healthy.

One of the most serious environmental problems today is pollution. Pollution occurs when harmful substances enter the air, water, or soil. Air pollution is often caused by cars, factories, and burning fuels. It can make breathing difficult and cause health problems, especially for children. Water pollution happens when waste, chemicals, or plastic enter rivers and seas, making water unsafe for living organisms.

Another major issue is waste. Modern societies produce large amounts of trash, much of which is plastic. Plastic does not decompose easily and can remain in the environment for hundreds of years. Animals may mistake plastic for food, which can lead to injury or death.

Climate change is also an important environmental challenge. Due to increased human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels, the Earth's temperature is rising. This leads to extreme weather conditions such as heatwaves, floods, and droughts. While climate change is a complex issue, students should understand that human actions play a significant role and that positive changes are possible.

The quality of the environment directly affects human health. Clean air supports healthy lungs and hearts, while polluted air can cause respiratory diseases. Clean water is essential for drinking, hygiene, and food production. When water sources are polluted, people are at risk of illness.

Environmental damage often affects children more strongly than adults because their bodies are still developing. Therefore, protecting the environment is also a way of protecting children's rights to health and safety. This understanding helps students connect environmental responsibility with care for themselves and others.

Environmental protection does not depend only on governments or scientists. Every person has a role to play. Small daily actions, when repeated by many people, can make a significant difference. Saving water, recycling materials, reducing waste, and using energy responsibly are practical ways students can help protect the environment.

Students should learn that responsibility begins at home and at school. Throwing trash in the correct place, respecting plants and animals, and keeping public spaces clean are examples of responsible behavior. These actions show respect not only for nature but also for other people who share the same environment.

Caring for nature is a value shared by many cultures around the world. In Greek culture, respect for the land and the sea has been important for centuries, especially because people depend on agriculture and fishing. In Islamic cultural tradition, humans are seen as caretakers of the Earth, responsible for protecting what has been entrusted to them. Similar ideas exist in many other cultures and belief systems.

Presenting these perspectives helps students understand that environmental responsibility is universal. It encourages mutual respect and intercultural understanding, especially in multicultural classrooms. Protecting the Earth is not linked to one culture or religion; it is a shared human duty.

Environmental education aims to prepare students to think critically, act responsibly, and care for future generations. Sustainability means meeting today's needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. By learning about environmental problems and solutions, students become active participants in building a healthier and more just world.

Teachers should emphasize hope and empowerment. While environmental problems are serious, positive change is possible through knowledge, cooperation, and responsible action. Children who learn to care for the environment today will become adults who protect it tomorrow.

The Earth is our shared home. Every action matters. By respecting nature, we protect our health, our communities, and our future. Caring for the environment is not only a responsibility—it is an act of respect toward life itself.

1. What Is the Environment?

Explain simply:

The environment includes: Air, Water, Land, Plants, Animals, People

Pedagogical focus:

The environment is not separate from humans—we are part of it.

2. Ecosystems and Balance

An ecosystem is explained as: A place where living and non-living things depend on each other

Examples: Forests, Seas, Cities, Farms

Key message:

When one part is damaged, everything is affected.

3. Environmental Problems (Age-Appropriate)

Pollution

Dirty air from cars and factories

Plastic in the sea

Chemicals in soil and water

Waste

Too much trash

Not recycling

Plastic that takes hundreds of years to decompose

Climate Change (Simplified)

The Earth is getting warmer

Weather becomes extreme

Caused mainly by human activities

Avoid fear-based language. Emphasize solutions.

4. How Environmental Problems Affect People

Dirty air causes breathing problems

Polluted water makes people sick

Destroyed nature reduces food and clean water

Environmental damage affects children the most

Key idea:

Protecting nature is also protecting human health.

5. Responsibility and Daily Actions

Children should understand that:

Big problems start with small actions

Everyone can help

Examples of responsible actions:

Saving water

Recycling

Not throwing trash

Respecting animals and plants

Saving energy

6. Intercultural and Islamic Perspective (Contextual)

Teacher guidance: This is presented as cultural knowledge, not religious instruction.

Key points:

In Islam, humans are considered caretakers (khalifa) of the Earth

Nature is seen as a trust (amanah)

Many cultures teach respect for land and water

Intercultural message:

Caring for nature is a shared value across cultures and religions, including Greek, Islamic, and global traditions.

14. Practical Activities & Timeline

1. Guided Discussion – “Nature Around Us” (7 minutes)

Questions:

How do people use nature in Greece?

What happens if nature is damaged?

Who should protect the environment?

2. Game – “Good for Earth / Bad for Earth” (7 minutes)

Teacher reads actions.

Students raise:

Green card – good for Earth

Red card – bad for Earth

Examples:

Recycling paper

Throwing plastic in the sea

Turning off lights

Wasting water

3. Worksheet – “My Role in Protecting Nature” (8 minutes)

Students:

✓ Match problems with solutions

✓ Circle eco-friendly actions

✓ Write or draw one promise to protect nature

4. Reflection Circle (5 minutes)

Sentence starters:

“Nature is important because...”

“One thing I can do to help the Earth is...”

Teacher concludes:

“Protecting the Earth means protecting our future.”

15. Variations and Extensions

Create a “Green Classroom Rules” poster

Organize a school recycling project

Connect with Geography (maps & climates)

Invite a local environmental organization

16. Informational Texts (Instead of Moral Stories)

Text A – From a Children’s Encyclopedia

Adapted Text:

“Pollution happens when harmful substances enter air, water, or land. Plastic waste is especially dangerous because animals may eat it or become trapped. Protecting nature helps animals, plants, and people live healthier lives.”

Source: National Geographic Kids Encyclopedia of the Environment

Text B – From a Child-Friendly Educational Source

Adapted Text:

“Recycling saves natural resources and energy. When materials like paper and plastic are reused, fewer trees are cut down and less waste ends up in landfills and oceans.”

Source: DK Children’s Encyclopedia: Our Planet

Text C – Global Perspective

Adapted Text:

“Children around the world are affected by environmental problems. Clean water, clean air, and a safe climate are children’s rights. Everyone has a role in protecting the planet.”

Source: UNICEF – Children and the Environment (educational materials)

17. Information for the Teacher

Pedagogical Notes

Focus on empowerment, not fear

Use real-life examples familiar to students in Greece

Encourage dialogue and respect for different cultures

Avoid political or religious instruction

Reinforce positive actions

Recommended Resources

UNESCO – Education for Sustainable Development

UNICEF – Environmental Education for Children

National Geographic Kids

DK Find Out! (Environment sections)

18. Final Teacher Reflection

After the lesson, reflect on:

Student engagement

Understanding of responsibility

Cultural sensitivity

Ability to connect actions with consequences

Final message: Caring for the Earth is a shared human responsibility that unites cultures, protects health, and secures the future for all children.

19. Sources of Information for the Lesson

(For Teacher Preparation and Student-Adapted Texts)

A. Children's Encyclopedias and Educational Books

These sources provide **age-appropriate explanations**, visuals, and factual accuracy. Texts used in the lesson are **adapted and simplified** for classroom use.

1. National Geographic Kids – Encyclopedia of the Environment

- Topics: Pollution, ecosystems, oceans, climate, waste
- Strengths: Clear language, strong visuals, global perspective
- Use in lesson:
 - Environmental problems
 - Plastic pollution
 - Human impact on nature

2. DK Children's Encyclopedia: Our Planet (Dorling Kindersley)

- Topics: Recycling, energy, biodiversity, climate
- Strengths: Short factual texts, diagrams, child-friendly explanations
- Use in lesson:

- Recycling
- Sustainable behavior
- Resource conservation

3. DK Find Out! – Environment & Ecology

- Topics: Ecosystems, climate change, conservation
- Strengths: Interactive approach, suitable for 10–11 year olds
- Use in lesson:
 - Ecosystem balance
 - Human responsibility

B. International Organizations (Educational Materials for Children)

These sources ensure **scientific accuracy and global relevance**.

4. UNICEF – Children and the Environment

- Focus: Children's rights, clean water, air, climate safety
- Strengths: Child-centered, rights-based perspective
- Use in lesson:
 - Environmental protection and children's well-being
 - Global responsibility

5. UNESCO – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

- Focus: Sustainability, responsibility, global citizenship
- Strengths: Educational frameworks and teacher guidance
- Use in lesson:
 - Values education
 - Long-term responsibility

6. World Health Organization (WHO) – Environment and Health (Educational Sections)

- Focus: Air quality, water safety, environmental health
- Strengths: Clear link between environment and human health
- Use in lesson:
 - Health effects of pollution

C. European and Greek Context Resources

These sources help the teacher **localize the lesson** for students living in Greece.

7. European Environment Agency (EEA) – Learning Materials

- Topics: Waste, recycling, climate in Europe
- Strengths: European perspective, factual data
- Use in lesson:
 - Environmental issues in Europe

8. Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy – Educational Publications

- Topics: Recycling, water protection, natural parks in Greece
- Strengths: Local relevance
- Use in lesson:
 - Greek ecosystems
 - Local responsibility

D. Intercultural and Ethical Context Sources

These sources support **cultural sensitivity** and values-based education.

9. UNESCO – Intercultural Education Guidelines

- Focus: Respect for cultural diversity
- Strengths: Inclusive pedagogical approach
- Use in lesson:
 - Intercultural dialogue
 - Shared environmental values

10. Islamic Environmental Ethics (Educational Summaries for Children)

- Examples:
 - ISESCO – Environment and Sustainable Development

- Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)
- Use in lesson:
 - Concept of stewardship (khalifa)
 - Nature as a trust (amanah)
- Teacher note: Used **only as cultural background**, not religious instruction.