

Teaching News Is Elementary

April 8, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, pencil, and paper.

Article: “Pact to tear down 4 Klamath dams is signed”

Page: Main, A6

Date: Thursday, April 7, 2016

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

What is a dam? Have you ever seen a dam? Why do people build dams? What are some benefits of dams? What are some problems that you can see with humans changing the environment?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it’s used in the sentence:

“Endangered salmon blocked for nearly a century from hundreds of miles of the Klamath River in Oregon and California are expected to return **en masse** under unusual agreements signed Wednesday to tear down four **hydroelectric** dams.”

En masse: in a group; all together.

Hydroelectric: electricity generated by hydropower; the production of electrical power through the use of flowing water.

“The dams now block fish from migrating to their historic **spawning** grounds and also **degrade** water quality, spreading fish diseases and algae blooms. Salmon are sacred to some Native American tribes that use them for **subsistence** and ceremony.”

Spawning: Full of or containing venom, poisonous

Degrade: Break down or make worse in quality

Subsistence: The amount of food, money, etc., that is needed to stay alive

“Our **allocation** of fish this year doesn’t meet half of our subsistence for our people,’ said Yurok Tribe Vice Chairman David Gensaw.”

Allocation: a share or part of a total amount

“The agreements include promises to keep working on a 6-year-old settlement process that went **dormant** when Congress failed to approve it last year. In addition to removing dams, an initial settlement would have restored tribal lands and provided more water for farmers and ranchers.”

Dormant: lying asleep or as if asleep; inactive

“By removing the dams without congressional approval and providing price assurances to farmers, backers hope to make the larger deal more **palatable** for Congress.”

Palatable: acceptable or agreeable

Journal Writing Prompts:

“SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Endangered salmon blocked for nearly a century from hundreds of miles of the Klamath River in Oregon and California are expected to return en masse under unusual agreements signed Wednesday to tear down four hydroelectric dams.”

Make a list about the pros and cons about the dam removal pact that you read about in the article.

Discussion Questions:

“Not everyone is celebrating. Dam removal is a major improvement, but the guarantees for farmers and ranchers don’t belong in the agreement, said Jim McCarthy of the conservation group WaterWatch.”

What pros and cons of dams did the article discuss? What are some positives and negatives of the dam removal project? What groups of people are affected by the dam? What groups of people support the dam removal? What groups of people might be against the dam removal? Who do you think should have the most say about if the dam is removed or not?

Small Group Discussion and Activity:

“The latest deal is spelled out in two agreements signed at the mouth of the river in Northern California in a ceremony attended by Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, California Gov. Jerry Brown, federal officials, tribal leaders, conservation groups, large-scale water users and PacifiCorp, the dam owner.”

Divide into small groups and role play as the stakeholders (people involved in the discussion about the dam removal). Conduct additional research to support the position of the stakeholder that you are representing. Engage in a kind and respectful debate using the following questions as a starting point: Should the dams be removed? Why/why not? What evidence do you have to support your point? Is there a way to make all the stakeholders happy? How should this situation be tackled in the future?