

PROTECT OUR PLANET

CREATIVE EXPRESSION IDEA STARTER



Protect Our Planet: Creative Expression Idea Starter

The air, land, and water around us are changing — and young people are noticing. They're asking questions, making observations, and trying to understand what these changes mean for their world. But knowing what to do with that awareness can be harder. Protect Our Planet, this year's Students Rebuild project, invites young people ages 5–25 to explore the air, land, and water around them and use creativity to share their stories and ideas for a healthier planet.

Through art, writing, performance, photography, digital media, or STEM, students will explore, create, and share. Together, their creativity supports organizations worldwide caring for the air, land, and water we all depend on.

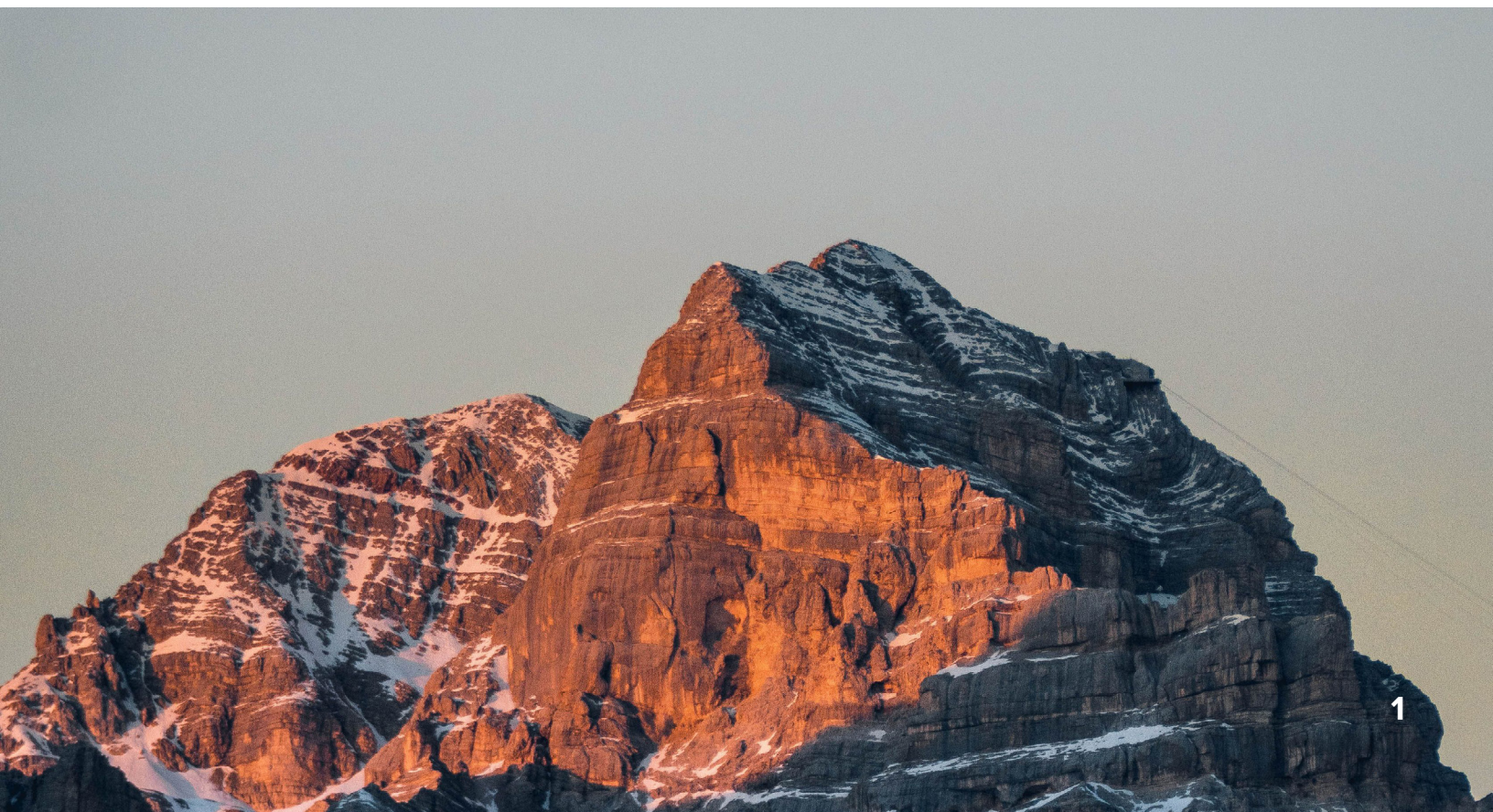
Activities to Explore Protect Our Planet

These engaging, easy-to-integrate activities invite learners to observe their environment, reflect on the importance of Earth's natural elements, and express their ideas creatively. Activities can be completed individually or collaboratively and are designed for use across a variety of grade levels. The activities also are element-agnostic, making them easy to adapt for investigations of land, water, or air, depending on your learners' interests and local environment.

Each activity includes a recommended age group, but educators are encouraged to modify the content and approach as needed to best support their learners.

Note to Educators

Because you know your learners and learning environment best, we encourage you to use your professional judgment when selecting, adapting, and implementing Protect Our Planet resources. We recognize that educational settings, community priorities, and local curriculum requirements vary, so please feel free to use these materials in ways that best support your learners and your teaching approach.



Visual Arts

Nature's Colors Scavenger Hunt | Ages: 5-10

Learners go on a scavenger hunt outdoors (schoolyard, park, or backyard) to find and collect—or draw, if collecting isn't possible—natural items that match a list of colors, such as something green, something brown, something that sparkles, something soft, and something round.

As they search, encourage learners to notice whether each item comes from the land, water, or air (for example, a leaf comes from the land, a feather may have floated on the air, a smooth stone might be shaped by water).

After the hunt, learners arrange their treasures (or drawings) on a simple chart or paper plate divided into three sections labeled Land, Water, and Air, sorting each item into the correct category.

Invite learners to create a Nature Color Collage by arranging their collected items (or drawings) into a colorful picture, pattern, or simple scene inspired by nature. They can give their artwork a title and share how the colors and natural objects work together to tell the story of the land, water, and air in their community.

To finish, learners can share their favorite find with a partner or the class and say one thing they noticed about it, such as its color, texture, or where they think it came from.



Earth Texture Rubbings | Ages: 5-11

Learners explore their schoolyard or neighborhood and collect texture rubbings of natural objects, such as tree bark, leaves, rocks, or soil, using crayons or pencils on paper. They combine the rubbings into a collage that celebrates the beauty and diversity of the natural world.

Challenge learners to collect or observe textures that represent all three natural elements:

- **Land:** tree bark, rocks, leaves, soil
- **Water:** shells, driftwood, reeds, smooth river stones
- **Air:** feathers found on the ground, seed pods, plants that move in the wind

After completing their collage, learners label each rubbing according to the element it represents and write a brief explanation of how all three elements work together to support life.



Three Elements Poster | Ages: 8+

Learners divide a poster board into three sections labeled Air, Land, and Water. In each section, they create drawings or paintings showing something they appreciate about that element and one simple way people can help protect it. Encourage learners to include plants, animals, people, or places that illustrate why each element is important to life on Earth. Learners may add labels, captions, or short facts to explain their artwork and help others understand how small actions can make a positive difference for our planet.

For older learners, ask them to include local environmental issues, ecosystems, or cause-and-effect relationships.

**A Few of My Favorite Things | Ages: 12+**

Invite students to head outside and capture photos of natural elements that they love or feel connected to—anything from a towering tree or colorful flower to a puddle, rock, cloud, or insect.

Students can:

- Create a digital collage of their favorite nature photos.
- Pair each photo with a brief caption explaining why that part of nature is meaningful to them.

This simple activity encourages students to slow down, observe the natural world, and reflect on the places, plants, animals, and landscapes they value and want to help protect.



Performing Arts

Be the Wind, Be the Water, be the Land | Ages: 5-9

Learners use their bodies and voices to act out different natural elements and the sounds or movements they make. The educator or leader calls out prompts, and learners respond with movement and sound:

- "Be the wind" — learners sway, swirl, and whoosh around the room
- "Be a raindrop" — learners crouch low, then patter and hop like falling rain
- "Be a growing tree" — learners stretch slowly from the ground upward, reaching branches (arms) to the sky
- "Be a bird in the air" — learners flap, glide, and swoop
- "Be a rock in a river" — learners freeze still while "water" (other classmates) flows gently around them
- "Be an octopus in the ocean" — learners wiggle their arms and legs like they are tentacles



After acting out several elements, gather learners in a circle and invite a few volunteers to make up their own short movement or sound to represent a favorite part of nature, encouraging the group to guess what it is before revealing it.

To close, ask learners to share one word describing how it felt to "become" their nature element (such as fast, gentle, wiggly, or peaceful).

If Nature Could Speak | Ages: 11+

Learners choose an organism or a natural feature connected to the air, land, or water—such as a bird, butterfly, whale, tree, river, cloud, mountain, coral reef, or even the wind—and create a short dramatic monologue from its perspective. They imagine what it has witnessed over time, what role it plays in its ecosystem, what challenges it faces, and what message it wants to share with people. Encourage learners to describe how their chosen subject is connected to its natural element and to other living things, explaining why protecting the air, land, or water is essential for a healthy planet. Learners should use descriptive language, sensory details, and emotion to bring their subject to life and inspire the audience to appreciate and care for the natural world. The monologue may be performed live or recorded as an audio or video presentation.



Literary Arts

"I Notice..." Nature Poem | Ages: 7-13

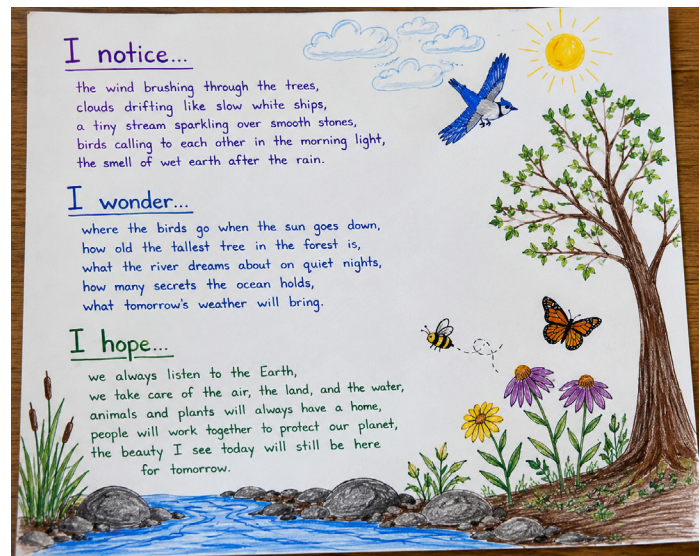
Invite learners to spend several minutes carefully observing the natural world outdoors or examining photographs of the air, land, and water. Encourage them to pay attention to colors, sounds, textures, movement, weather, plants, animals, and other details they might not normally notice.

Using their observations as inspiration, learners write a short free verse poem or haiku that begins with the prompts:

- I notice...
- I wonder...
- I hope...

Encourage learners to use descriptive language and sensory details to help readers visualize and experience the natural world. Their poems should express both what they observe and how those observations inspire curiosity, appreciation, or hope for our planet's future.

For younger learners, write the poem together as a class or have learners complete the sentence stems with words or short phrases. Teachers can scribe learners' ideas.



Future Earth Story | Ages: 9-14

Learners write a short story imagining their community 50 years in the future, after people have worked together to care for the environment. They describe how the air, land, or water has changed and how life has improved. Encourage learners to consider the actions people took to create this positive future, such as reducing pollution, restoring habitats, planting trees, conserving water, and protecting wildlife. Learners should include descriptive details about how people, plants, animals, and natural spaces have benefited from these efforts, and explain how caring for one element has positively impacted the others.

Their stories should have a clear beginning, middle, and ending, demonstrating how individual and community actions can lead to a healthier, more sustainable future. Learners may choose to illustrate key scenes from their stories to further bring their vision to life.



Media Arts

A Place I Love in Nature | Ages: 10+

Invite students to create a short video featuring a favorite place in nature. They might film themselves exploring or enjoying the space, share what makes it special to them, or simply capture the beauty of the natural environment through video.

As they film, encourage students to notice how the land, water, and air come together to make their special place unique. They might capture the shapes and textures of the land, the movement or presence of water, and the sounds or motion of the air, such as birds calling, leaves rustling, clouds drifting, or a gentle breeze.

Whether students include narration or let the sights and sounds of nature speak for themselves, this activity encourages them to slow down, observe, and celebrate the natural places they care about while recognizing how the land, water, and air work together to support life.



One Minute for the Planet | Ages: 12+

Learners create a one-minute video highlighting one thing they appreciate about the air, land, or water in their community. They may include narration, interviews, drawings, photographs, or video clips and finish with one action viewers can take to help protect the planet.

Encourage learners to plan their video by creating a simple storyboard or outline before filming to ensure their message is clear and engaging. Learners should include facts or observations that explain why their chosen natural element is important to people, plants, and wildlife, and use a combination of visuals and narration to inspire others to appreciate and care for their local environment.

Videos may conclude with a call to action that encourages viewers to make a positive difference in their own community.



STEM

Nature Collection Investigation | Ages: 5-11

Learners become nature scientists by exploring their schoolyard, neighborhood, or another outdoor space to observe or collect natural objects that represent land, air, or water. They sort their discoveries by characteristics such as size, color, texture, shape, or natural element, then compare their observations to identify patterns and discuss what they reveal about their community.

Using what they discovered, learners create a Nature Discovery Board by drawing or adding pictures of the natural objects they observed, organizing them into categories, and including labels, measurements, or interesting facts. They finish by sharing one thing they learned about their chosen natural element and one way people can help protect it.

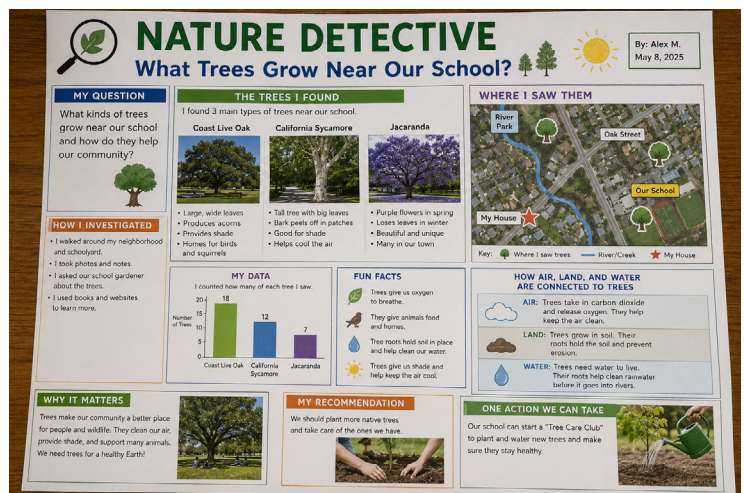


Nature Detective | Ages: 11-14

Learners investigate one local environmental question, such as:

- Where does our drinking water come from?
- What trees grow near our school?
- What animals depend on our local habitat?
- How does the weather affect our community?

Learners present their findings through a simple infographic, poster, or slideshow that includes one recommendation for protecting that natural resource. Encourage learners to gather information from multiple reliable sources, make observations in their community, or, when possible, interview a local expert. Learners should include facts, maps, diagrams, photographs, or illustrations to help explain their findings and clearly describe how the air, land, and water are connected to their chosen topic. Conclude by asking learners to explain how protecting this natural resource benefits both people and wildlife and to identify one action their school or community could take to help preserve it.



Culinary Arts

Eat the Rainbow | Ages: 7-12

Learners create a colorful snack or meal using fruits and vegetables that represent the colors of nature. They then write a short reflection explaining where the ingredients come from and why healthy ecosystems are important for growing food. Encourage learners to identify which natural elements—air, land, and water—support each ingredient's growth and to consider the roles of sunlight, soil, rainfall, pollinators, and farmers in producing healthy food.

Learners may also reflect on one or two actions people can take, such as conserving water, protecting pollinators, reducing food waste, or supporting sustainable farming, to help ensure that future generations have access to fresh, nutritious foods.



Local Foods Map | Ages: 9+

Learners identify one food that is grown or produced in their region. They create a simple illustrated map showing the journey from the land or water to their table. Encourage learners to include each step of the food's journey, such as growing, harvesting, transporting, purchasing, and preparing the food, using arrows, labels, or short descriptions. In a written reflection, learners explain why protecting natural resources supports farmers and, consequently, communities.

Learners may also identify how the air, land, and water contribute to producing their chosen food and reflect on one or two ways people can help protect these natural resources so healthy food systems can continue to thrive. Learners may include illustrations of the plants, animals, people, or ecosystems involved along the way.



Make an Impact

Regardless of the activity you choose, remember to share your creative expression at studentsrebuild.org—each work of creative expression or learner engaged raises \$5 to support organizations working to protect our planet and strengthen communities around the world.