## Title of Lesson:
Need vs. Wants in Creating Sustainable Communities

## Lesson By:
Mary Carroll Alexander

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level/ Subject Areas:</th>
<th>Class Size:</th>
<th>Time/ Duration of Lesson:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th grade Earth Environmental Science</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>95 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Goals/ Objectives of Lesson:
- Students will develop a working definition of needs and wants.
- Students will discern between personal and community needs and wants by creating lists through journaling and group work.
- Students will identify the resources used, both renewable and non-renewable, to create their needs and wants through class discussion.
- Students will develop an opinion on what they consider to be “rich” and “poor” and if this is related to possessions.
- Students will compare and contrast their communities with those of Gandhi’s ashrams in a freewrite essay.

## Lesson Abstract: (summarize your lesson in about 50 words)
This lesson gives students the opportunity to (1) critically discern between personal needs and wants, (2) make decisions and articulate the disadvantage and advantage of chosen needs and wants, and (3) consider Gandhi’s ideals in creating self-sustaining communities and to think critically about how to make their homes, school and communities more sustainable.

## Lesson Content: (write about 2 pages explaining the actual content of your lesson)

“Even though I possess nothing, I am rich.” – Gandhi

“Renounce and enjoy.” –Gandhi

“Civilization in the real sense consists not in the multiplicity of wants, but in the deliberate reduction in wants.”
-Gandhi

“We are at the crossroads of history. If humanity is to survive, we will have to reexamine our concept of progress and development, and our addiction to having more and more.”
– Kalma Chowdhry

In our culture of consumerism, the public seems to be addicted to having more and more. We are bombarded constantly with advertisements for the latest shoes, clothes, electronics, cell phones, cars, toys and even food. Purchases soon become used or forgotten and quickly end up in landfills. What do we really need amidst all of this stuff? Humans only really need water, food, clothing, and shelter to survive, and even these can be disputed.
Consider the following statistics:

- Two thirds of the citizens of the world live on less than two dollars a day.
- The United States comprises of 5% of the world’s population, but they use 30% of the world’s resources.
- Eight million people die each year due to the lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.
- In the United States, 13% or 37 million people live below the poverty line. This represents the greatest percentage of poverty for a population in the developed world, equal to the size of Canada.

One man in recent history challenged this culture of greed and consumption by living his life as an example of simplicity in material possessions. Mohandas Gandhi was a major political and spiritual leader in India during the first half of the twentieth century, and his life and teachings continue to influence modern society today. He was a pivotal part of Indian independence from British rule through his belief of ahimsa, or non-violence in thought, word, and deed. This included a deep understanding and commitment to practicing non-violence with people, animals, the environment, and even entire countries, as demonstrated by his fight for Indian independence from the British empire. His ideals were also deeply rooted in satyagraha, meaning “soul force,” or grasping on to the truth. Gandhi was constantly seeking truth in all situations and exploring the most just and fair methods for society and the world as a whole. Gandhi influenced countless leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Gandhi gave up material possessions in order to more effectively serve humanity. He believed that living simply was an internal change. Gandhi began his life rather comfortably in India, and then continued this comfortable life as he went to study law in England. As Gandhi then lived in South Africa, he came to understand and desire a simple life in order to focus on a life of serving others.

Gandhi’s ashrams were communities in which simplicity was not only valued, but necessary. He believed strongly in the idea of renouncing material possessions in order to lead a life of public service. Without “stuff,” he was free to travel and serve other people. His actions were genuine because he clearly did not want any money or possessions in return. At the end of Gandhi’s life, he had very few personal possessions—sandals, eyeglasses, a few books, and a watch. Even though he had given up all that he had in material things, he gained fulfillment and happiness through his search for truths and his desire for social justice. Gandhi said, “Even though I possess nothing, I am rich.” In the present society of consumerism and desire, it is hard for many to comprehend how someone could be happy with no possessions.

Non-renewable resources are resources that take millions of years to be replenished. These include oil, coal, gas, and uranium. Renewable resources can be easily replenished, such as the sun, trees, wind, and water. For example, we will never run out of solar energy as long as we have the sun.
Resources are quickly disappearing from the planet as population continues to grow at an exponential rate and many humans, mostly on developing countries, consume large quantities of resources through energy use and material possessions. Nonrenewable resources are certainly not unlimited. In fact, oil reserves could be depleted within the next 50 years if we continue to use it at such a rapid rate. Coal is plentiful and cheap, but when burned for electricity, releases harmful fumes into the air that we breathe. Deforestation continues to destroy habitat all over the world at an alarming rate as land is cleared for agriculture, grazing, or development. Landfills are growing as humans create more and more waste—houses are torn down and rebuilt with new materials, out with the old—up with the bigger and better—the majority of landfill waste comes from construction. Take out dinner, absurd amounts of packaging, and low quality products end up in the landfill shortly after they come into the hands of the consumers.

Are we living sustainably?

It is crucial for students to take a look at how modern human civilization has affected the environment, and think about what we need to do as a community, nation, and world in order to make our resources last. How can humans tread lightly on the planet?

Water and air quality, resource use, waste management, water treatment, sustainable agriculture, reduction of waste, and conservation of biodiversity, are all crucial issues to consider as we move forward in the 21st century. Gandhi’s views from the 20th century still resonate today in a growing and changing world where environmental change is becoming not just a fad, but a necessity.

**State Content Standards: North Carolina Earth Environmental Science Standards**

**Objective 1.06:**
Identify and evaluate a range of possible solutions to earth and environmental issues at the local, national, and global level including considerations of:

- Interdependent human and natural systems.
- Diverse perspectives.
- Short and long range impacts.
- Economic development, environmental quality and sustainability.
- Opportunities for and consequences of personal decisions.
- Risks and benefits of technological advances.

**Objective 2.06**
Investigate and analyze the importance and impact of the economic development of earth’s finite rock, mineral, soil, fossil fuel and other natural resources to society and our daily lives:

- Availability.
- Geographic distribution.
- Conservation/Stewardship.
- Recycling.
- Environmental impact.
- Challenge of rehabilitation of disturbed lands.
**Objective 2.07**
Analyze the sources and impacts of society's use of energy.
- Renewable and non-renewable sources.
- The impact of human choices on Earth and its systems.

**Objective 4.04**
Evaluate water resources:
- Storage and movement of groundwater.
- Ecological services provided by the ocean
- Environmental impacts of a growing human population.
- Causes of natural and manmade contamination.

**Guiding Questions:** *(major questions your lesson will address)*
- What is the difference between a need and a want?
- What are needs we have in our personal life and our community life?
- What creates happiness? What makes up happy? Is this related to needs and wants?
- Is happiness a temporary state of mind a state of being?
- What can we do to create sustainable communities?

**Materials Needed:** *(list any materials needed for this lesson- e.g., art supplies, LCD projector)*
- Journals and writing utensils
- LCD projector
- Computer with internet access connected to LCD projector
- Various materials that could be used for building models of sustainable communities
  (paper, markers, pens, or even cardboard, clay, natural elements, recycled items, plastic bottles, glue, old magazines, anything on hand…)

**Lesson Context:** *(how this lesson may fit into a larger unit of study; how you will include the digital story you create):*
This lesson can be used as a follow up from the lesson: “Sustainable Communities and Gandhi’s ashrams.”

If this lesson is used on its own, a knowledge of Gandhi and his ashrams is necessary (see Lesson Content from the lesson: Sustainable Communities and Gandhi’s Ashrams).

This lesson can be used at the beginning of a unit on resource use. Its purpose is to make students think about what they truly need versus what they want, and the amount of resources they use on a daily basis.

It can also be used to relate Gandhi’s ideals of simplicity to everyday life.

**Teaching Activities:** *(describe methods or strategies used to teach content)*
1. Begin class with a 5 minute “deep listening” exercise. Students should close their eyes as the teacher reads the following, pausing for several moments in between each
question/thought. Think about what human beings need in order to survive. Imagine yourself on a deserted island. What would you need in order live? Do you think all human beings have these basic needs? Now, think about the things that you have in your home, community, and school. Are all of these things necessary for survival? Now, think about all of the things that you want. If you could have any material thing in the world that you want, what would it be? Why did you choose this? Would you consider it a need or a want?

2. Then, give students 5 minutes to journal about their deep listening experience.

3. Individually, have students make a T chart on a piece of paper. On one side of the paper, they should list their needs, and on the other side, they should list their personal wants. Make sure the students have brainstormed their list of needs and wants.

4. As a class, make a list on the board of needs and wants. Each students should choose one want and one need from their list to add to the class list. There will be probably be some disagreements among the students as to what constitutes a need and a want, but write down everything that the students say (within reason). Students will have a chance to edit this list later.

5. Write the following quote on the board.
   “Even though I possess nothing, I am rich.” – Gandhi
   Begin class discussion after giving students a few moments to think about this quote and jot down a few thoughts in their journal. What does this mean? Do you think this quote is true? Why is one rich without possessing anything? How can one improve the condition of poverty without using material wealth? What is happiness to you? Do money and possessions bring happiness? Why is our culture so centered on stuff?

6. Write the following statistics on the board:
   “The United States represents 5% of the world’s population and consumes 30% of the world’s resources.”
   “Two thirds of the world population lives on under $2 a day.”
   Again, give students a few moments to think about these statistics. Then, resume discussion.

7. Show a video clip/snapshot of poverty, sickness/disease, destruction, and/or poor working/learning conditions in the US and other countries. Have students think of possible solutions to improve these situations, but without using material wealth or financial resources.

8. Now, shift the discussion from personal wants and needs to community wants and needs. What does a community need in order to function? What do you want your community to have? What did Gandhi’s ashrams have? How did they sustain the needs of all of the people that lived there? Do you think Gandhi’s ashrams used a comparable amount of resources to what we use today in the United States?

9. What kind of resources are used to take care of our needs and wants? Go back to the list of needs and wants. Go through each item on the list (or choose ones that the students believe to be the most important). What resources are used for each one? Are they renewable or nonrenewable (It may be important to review the definitions and examples for both renewable and nonrenewable resources here. Students should have an understanding of this before beginning this lesson).

10. How could you create a sustainable community where the needs of all people are taken care of? How could you use the least amount of resources possible in order to create...
this? What do you think is important to include in a community? In thinking about what you have now, what would you be willing to give up in order to make your community more sustainable?

**Assessment/ Evaluation:** *(how students will be evaluated or show mastery)*

- Journal entry created throughout the lesson
- Assessment of participation in discussion
- Project of change: Creating a sustainable community (see below)

**Extension Activities/ Enrichment** *(ways you can extend the lesson through service projects, family involvement, etc.)*

1. Split students up into groups of 4 or 5 students. They will be creating their own sustainable communities. This can be done many different ways. Students may spend 30 minutes creating a community with paper and markers, or this could be a week long project where students make mini-models of sustainable communities. Students should consider energy use, housing, clothing, food, water management, natural resources, transportation, and any other aspect of daily life. The community should be able to produce everything that it needs and also deal with its waste. After students have had time to brainstorm for 5-10 minutes, the teacher could pose the following questions to the students to make sure they are going in the right direction. Questions to consider: Where will food come from (for people and animals)? What is the soil quality like and how can it be improved to last for years to come? How will food get from the farm to the mouth of the people (is it going to be processed, then sold in a grocery store, etc)? Where does the drinking water come from? How is it cleaned and transported to homes and businesses? What are housed made of? What is the system for waste management? Water treatment? How do you get your energy or electricity? Where do your clothes come from? How are they made? What natural resources are used? Where do they come from?

2. This lesson could turn into a culminating project with several different parts. Students could build models of sustainable communities, only using recycled or reused materials. They could also choose one aspect of their sustainable community and write a short paper on this aspect of sustainability. Group and individual presentations could be included at the culmination of this project, and other community or school members could be invited to this presentation.

3. This lesson could also lead into a community or school project where students decide to change an aspect of their school or community to make it more sustainable. Ideas include an organic community garden, looking into alternative forms of energy for the school or other businesses, initiating a recycling/reuse program, creating bike paths, organizing carpools, organizing a boycott on certain products produced by unsustainable or unjust methods, etc. The possibilities are endless! Projects like these could be the most meaningful lesson of the year because they empower students and show them that they can go out into their community and world and make a difference.

**Bibliography:** *(cite sources used in this lesson)*