

# History of the EPA Policies Lesson Plan

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## Overview

This lesson will focus on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with attention paid to the historical policies and their long-term implications. It will serve as a lesson that is part of a larger unit on climate change and the government's actions, responses and policies that relate to climate change. The EPA has a long history in enforcing acts of Congress, advocating for measures to help protect citizens and the environment from harms as well as taking executive and, at times unilateral, action to protect the environment. The EPA was formed by an executive order issued by Richard Nixon and is thus an excellent illustration of that constitutional power and the balance between the legislative and executive branches of government. This lesson is designed for high school students who have sufficient background in research procedures and web-based navigation. It is appropriate for any student in a government or other social studies classroom but can be easily adapted for a science, business or humanities class.

**Key words:** EPA, Climate Change, Executive Action, Executive Branch, Richard Nixon, DDT, Environment, Regulation, Federal Government, Federalism, Executive Order, Bureaucracy

## Instructions

1) The lesson will begin with a brief overview (delivered through direct instruction) of the formation of the EPA in the 1970s with particular focus to the mood and atmosphere of the country during this time and the reason for its formation. This introduction should last between 20-30 minutes or could be extended into an entire class period dependant upon the thematic focus of the instructor and the context of the lesson. The instruction should end with highlights of policies the EPA has enforced and regulations put in place. These policies will be used as starting points for student research.

2) After students have a sufficient background on the EPA they should be divided into groups of 3-4 students to research a specific action that the EPA has taken over the last 40 years. The instructor can provide the list, or students can choose a policy or decision as they research, However it is important that the list of policies is diverse enough to show historical and contemporary events, perhaps 2-3 from each decade (70s-present). Students will then spend 50-90 minutes researching their topic and preparing a 1-sheet policy briefing using a google doc template.

3) Students will then share their policy brief with the class and print one copy to present. Each group will give a brief 3-5 minute presentation of their findings based on their '1-sheet' and then place their final product on a large timeline that will include each groups research product.

4) As a de-briefing exercise students will respond to a prompt either in an online discussion forum or in paper form. The prompt could be: "Which EPA policy do you believe has had the greatest positive impact for U.S. citizens? Which has had the least positive impact, or has done more harm than

good?” (This could also be easily adapted to a Structured Academic Debate focussing on whether the EPA is a good or bad federal agency.)

### **Materials**

-Digital Projector -Mobile devices or CPUS -Access to GAFE -Policy briefing 1-sheet templete -Butcher Paper or whiteboard for timeline

### **Resources**

[Policy Briefing 1-Sheet Template](#)

[EPA Website](#) This site has a timeline of major events secondary sources on the formation and history of the EPA and lots of background information.

[Top 10 EPA events from](#) the Aspen Institute

### **Rubric**

A= Well beyond the minimum a truly inspiring effort.

B= Minimum Expectations were thoroughly met and done well.

C= Minimum Expectations were met in an efficient and average level.

D= Key aspects of the assignment were forgotten or not attempted.

F= Assignment not completed as instructed.

### **Standards**

[Standards for this unit will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards](#)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1.D CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2

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