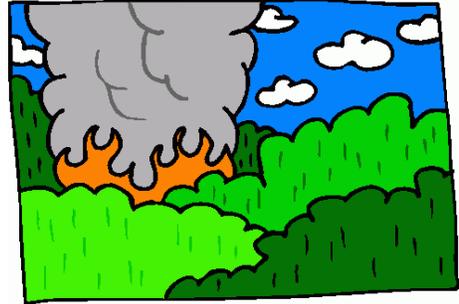

Fire Messages



Objective

Students will describe and analyze the overt and underlying messages about forest fire in pamphlets, brochures, booklets and artifacts.

Students will create a pamphlet, brochure, booklet, poster or other artifact that conveys a that incorporates the complex concepts of fire ecology.

Materials

Materials packet for *Fire Messages* activity (32 items in Smokey Bear bag):

- Smokey Bear poster
- “The True Story of Smokey Bear” booklet
- “Living on the Wild Side Responsibly” booklet
- “Smokey Bear Activity Book” photocopied booklet
- Firebrand newspaper
- “Be Ember Aware” pamphlet
- “Wildfire: Are You Prepared?” pamphlet
- “Living With Wildfire: A Homeowner’s Guide” booklet
- “Help Smokey Prevent Forest Fires!” bumper sticker
- “Keep Your Home Safe From Wildfire: Maintain Your Defensible Space Annually! Winter Activity Guide” pamphlet
- “Help Your Home Survive A Fire: Clean up & Maintain Your Defensible Space! Spring-Summer Guide” pamphlet
- “Smokey N’ Da Boyz” postcard
- “The National Fire Plan” pamphlet
- “Wildland Fire in the United States” pamphlet
- “Open Burning Tips” pamphlet
- “Are You Concerned about wildfires?” bookmark
- “I’m Concerned about Off-Road Vehicle Safety” bookmark
- “I’m Concerned about Campfire Safety” bookmark
- “I’m Concerned about Smoking” bookmark
- Smokey Bear bookmark
- “How to Have a Firewise Home” pamphlet
- “Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes” postcard
- “Firewise Communities” bookmark
- “Guidelines for Firewise Landscaping in an Urban Setting” pamphlet
- “Preventing Fire with Fire: How do we do it?” pamphlet
- “Wildland Firefighter Foundation: The 52 Club” pamphlet

Appropriate Grade Level: 9th-12th

Time Required: 1 Hour (or more)

Curriculum Standards: Science H.2L.2, H.2E.4. English Language Arts: HS.RE.02, HS.RE.22, HS.RE.25, HS.RE.26, HS.RE.29, HS.RE.31, HS.RE.35, HS.WR.04, HS.WR.06, HS.WR.24. Social Science: HS.43, HS.57, HS.58, HS.59, HS.60, HS.61, HS.62, HS.63

- “Fire Free!” pamphlet
- “Wildland Fire in the Northern Rockies” brochure
- “Use of Fire in the Landscape” interpretive card
- “Your Home in the WUI” brochure
- Smokey Bear button
- Smokey Bear pencil

Background Information

Smokey Bear and his slogan, “Only you can prevent forest fires!” were created in the 1940s by the Ad Council to spread the message of preventing and putting out forest fires. The Disney movie *Bambi* depicts fire as a terrifying and absolutely destructive force of nature. These images and their associated messages promote the idea that fire is an unnatural and harmful presence in our forests. This idea has permeated American society and directed national fire policies that attempt to control and suppress wildfires at almost any cost. While most people agree that fire can be destructive and should be put out when they threaten lives and property, these messages ignore the important role that fire plays in our forests. The goal of this activity is to encourage students to take a critical look at fire pamphlets, brochures, booklets and artifacts distributed by national and local government agencies, and analyze these messages with a fire ecology lenses.

Activity

- 1) Distribute one item from the Smokey Bear bag to each student, or pairs of students. (You can also use the bag as an item.)
- 2) Ask the students to examine their item. They should look for keyword and images, and also think about how people would use the item.
- 3) Ask the students to identify the item’s messages about fire. Who is supposed to receive this message (the audience)? For example, is it an instructional brochure about how to protect your home from wildfire? Or is it a booklet that teaches children about the dangers of wildfire?
- 4) Dig a little deeper into the artifact’s messages about fire. How is the item’s message supposed to change the way people think and act? For example, does it portray fire as a scary thing, or can it be helpful? Is fire portrayed as completely negative or positive? Does it say fire be prevented at all costs, or does fire have an important role? What responsibilities does the user of the item have in regards to fire?
- 4) Based on their finding, have the class share their item and its message. Ask them to share if their item portrays fire as good, bad, both good and bad, or somewhere in between. Are the messages simple or complex?
- 5) Have the students create their own pamphlet, brochure, booklet, poster or other item with a message about fire. Their item should convey a message that is balanced and incorporates their new understanding of the complex concepts of fire ecology. For example, the students could create a new slogan for Smokey Bear, or create a new mascot that recognizes fire’s threats and benefits.

Fire Messages

