

Pledge to Protect a Favorite Park

What is the purpose of a pledge? Why are parks important, and what can we do to protect them?

Overview

Students analyze the Pledge of Allegiance and other examples and think about why people make pledges. They select a green space that is important to them and brainstorm ways to help protect it. They write a park pledge and add it to an interactive map.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://education.nationalgeographic.org/activity/pledge-protect-favorite-park/>

With Support From



Directions

1. Activate students' prior knowledge about pledges.

Ask students if they have ever said a pledge, and have them share examples. Explain that in this activity, students will have an opportunity to create their own pledge about a natural place that they care about.

2. Do a “close reading” of a pledge.

Distribute a copy of the Pledge Examples handout to each student. For the “close reading,” guide students through these steps to analyze the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance:

- Have students read the Pledge silently. As they read, have students highlight unfamiliar words or passages in one color, and key words and passages in another color.
- After reading, have students write a short response to the text. This could include a summary of what someone who recites the pledge is promising to do, or any questions or points of confusion.
- Next, have them discuss the reading with a partner.
- Read the Pledge out loud to students.
- Have students look up unfamiliar words as they read the pledge again, silently. As they read, have them write notes and observations about the text in the margins.
- Again, have them write a quick response, reflecting any new understandings of the text.

- Project the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance text and read it out loud once more. Invite students to help you rewrite the pledge, line by line, in their own words as you read.

Guide students to recognize that making a pledge means promising some action. With the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, that action is to remain loyal to the United States of America. Other pledges may be promises for other types of actions.

3. Analyze another pledge.

Next, have students work in pairs to read and annotate more pledges, such as a school honor code pledge from the Pledge Examples handout or another from links in the "Resources Provided" section of the "Preparation" tab. Have them again write a quick response, and then discuss it with a partner. As a class, discuss the pledges students read and create a list of characteristics that the pledges share. Ask: *What actions does your pledge represent?*

4. Develop a working definition of a pledge.

Have students jot down their own definition of a pledge. Have several students share their definitions with the class and write key words from these definitions on the board. Develop a class definition and compare it to the dictionary definition. Discuss the importance of pledges. Ask: *Is it important to keep a pledge that you make? Why or why not? Would you make a pledge if you did not intend to keep it?*

5. Identify an important green space.

Have students think about a green space that is important to them. This could be a nearby park, a playground, or even a field. Have students write the name of this place in the middle of a piece of paper and circle it. Then have them create an idea web to brainstorm things they like about this place. Using the idea web they created as inspiration, have students write a paragraph describing their green space and why it is important to them.

6. Brainstorm problems and solutions.

Have students list any problems that they have noticed in their green space. Then have them brainstorm some other problems that could negatively affect their space. Allow students to share their ideas with the class. Then, as a class, discuss some of the common problems students listed. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm some specific solutions to or ways to prevent the problems they identified. Allow small groups to share their ideas with the class. Ideas might include bringing a reusable water bottle when they visit the green space, packing out any trash, making other people aware of the importance of the green space, and/or bringing an extra bag to clean up any litter.

7. Write a pledge.

Have students select one or two ideas from the class list that would address current or potential problems in their green space. Have them compose a pledge to protect their green space, using these ideas. Have them read their pledge to a partner and get feedback. They can make any changes based on that feedback, and then enter their pledge into the [Pledge To Love America's Parks](#) tool.

Modification

Allow developing readers or English language learners to work with a partner instead of reading individually.

Tip

As a transition between Steps 4 and 5, show the video "[Who We Are is What We Leave Behind.](#)" Ask students to identify the pledge made in the video. Ask: *Who is making the pledge? What are they pledging to do? Do you think this is an important pledge? Why or why not?*

Modification

Have students who need more support write their pledges in small groups.

Tip

If your school has an honor code pledge, you can substitute it for one on the Pledge Examples handout.

Tip

In Step 5, the writing can be assigned as homework to give students additional time to reflect on the space they selected.

Tip

In Step 7, as an alternative to individual pledges, students can write a pledge as a class.

Informal Assessment

Assess students' pledges informally. Did the student identify a potential problem that could occur in their green space? Does their pledge address that problem in a reasonable way? Is their pledge written with grade-appropriate grammar and spelling?

Extending the Learning

- Have students view some of the other pledges in the [Pledge To Love America's Parks](#) map. They can share a favorite pledge with the class and explain why they like it. Then have students brainstorm some categories that the pledges they read might fit into (i.e. litter, climate change, etc.). Assign a state to each student and have that student take a random sampling of ten pledges from that state. Have them categorize each pledge. Combine students' numbers to determine how many of the sampled pledges fit in each category. Graph the results.
- If possible, have students share their pledges with their chosen location. A park might agree to

feature the students' work on a bulletin board or website.

- Follow up with students to ask how they are fulfilling their pledge. Have them take turns giving brief updates or create a bulletin board where they can share their efforts.

Objectives

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Human Geography

Language Arts

- Writing (composition)

Social Studies

- Current events/issues

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze a pledge.
- Identify potential problems in a park or other green space, and develop possible solutions.
- Write a pledge and enter it on an interactive map.

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Reading
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Applying
 - Creating
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills

- Organizing Geographic Information
- Science and Engineering Practices
 - Asking questions (for science) and defining problems (for engineering)

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

National Council for Social Studies Curriculum Standards

- **Theme 3:**
People, Places, and Environments

National Geography Standards

- **Standard 14:**
How human actions modify the physical environment

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

- **Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5:**
Key Ideas and Details. RI.4.1
- **Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5:**
Key Ideas and Details, RI.5.1
- **Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5:**
Key Ideas and Details, RI.4.2
- **Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5:**
Key Ideas and Details, RI.3.1
- **Writing Standards K-5:**
Production and Distribution of Writing, W.3.4
- **Writing Standards K-5:**
Production and Distribution of Writing, W.4.4
- **Writing Standards K-5:**
Production and Distribution of Writing, W.5.4

Preparation

What You'll Need

Materials You Provide

- Multi-colored highlighters
- Paper
- Pencils

Required Technology

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector, Speakers

Physical Space

- Classroom

Setup

No special setup required

Grouping

- Large-group instruction

Resources Provided: Handouts & Worksheets

- [Pledge Examples](#)

Background & Vocabulary

Background Information

Many countries have a pledge of allegiance. The United States' Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy, a minister, in 1892. It was originally intended for people of any country. In 1923, the pledge was altered to reference the United States, when the words "my flag" were changed to "the flag of the United States of America." The pledge was changed once again in 1954, when fear of communism was high in the United States, and President Eisenhower requested that Congress add the words "under God."

Prior Knowledge

[]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
pledge	<i>verb</i>	to guarantee or promise.



© 1996–2016 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved.