Water in Our Lives- Connecting with Local and National Waters

Grades 5/6 • Pen Pals for Water

Lesson Details	
Grades	**5-6**
Subjects	**English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies** ***Note:*** *Curriculum connections vary by grade and province/territory. Refer to the Curriculum Connections document for more information.*
Topic	**Water in Our Lives**
Lesson 1	**80 minutes**
Date Taught	

LEARNING GOALS

Big Idea: Freshwater connects people, ecosystems, and communities.

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Explore local water systems and how water shapes life, culture, and community.

- Reflect on personal connections to water.
- Develop critical thinking, communication, and personal/social responsibility.
- Compare local experiences with peers across Canada.

MATERIALS

- Student Worksheets
- Reference sheets (Stations 1-3 & Reflection)
- Video link
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers/ Pencils
- Student notebooks or loose paper for notes

Lesson Flow – Quick Guide

1. **Exploring Our Local Water (20 min)**
   Purpose: Introduce students to where their water comes from, how people depend on it, and why local water sources matter.
   Activity: Introduce the guiding question, *"Where does my water come from, and why does it matter?"* Lead a short teacher-guided discussion followed by a Think–Pair–Share. Chart student ideas under Home & School, Work & Community, and Fun & Culture.
2. **All About Water (10 min)**
   Purpose: Build students' understanding of what freshwater is and why it's important.
   Activity: Watch a short video about a freshwater. Students record one new thing they learned about water or its journey.
3. **Water in Our Lives – Station Rotation (30 min)**
   Purpose: Explore where water comes from, who depends on it, and the different relationships people and ecosystems have with water.
   Activity: In small groups, students rotate through three stations for approximately 10 minutes each: Follow the Water, Who Uses Water, and Culture & Water. Students use the station resources and record their learning on their worksheet.
4. **My Water Memory (15 min)**
   Purpose: Encourage students to reflect on a positive personal memory or connection they have with water.
   Activity: Students think of a positive memory involving water and create a drawing representing the place, activity, or experience. They can cut out their drawing and, if they choose, include it with a future Pen Pals for Water letter.
5. **Optional: Bringing It Together (5–10 min)**

Purpose: Help students connect their learning and recognize why water matters to people, communities, cultures, and ecosystems.
Activity: As a class, discuss what students discovered about their connections to water and why caring for freshwater matters. Reinforce the takeaway: *"Water connects us—to each other, our communities, and the environment."*

Assessment

- **Formative:** Participation in discussion & rotations
- **Summative:** Reflections, diagrams, task completion
- **Self-Assessment:** "One new thing I learned about water in my region"

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Lesson Info and Teaching Steps

Teaching note — For activity 3 print and prepare the station resources for stations 1-3. Arrange the classroom so students can easily rotate between the three stations. circulate, and support students as they complete worksheets.

Activity 1: Exploring Our Local Water

Purpose: Help students understand where their local water comes from, how it moves through their community, and why clean, healthy water sources are important to people and ecosystems.

Activity Steps:

1. **On the board, write:**
   a. *Where does my water come from, and why does it matter?*

b. Beneath the guiding question, write the following four topics. Discuss each one as a class, using simple, local examples where possible:
    i. Local water sources (creeks, rivers, lakes, groundwater)
    ii. How water is collected, treated, and delivered to homes and schools
    iii. Where water goes after we use it (wastewater treatment and return to rivers, lakes, or other parts of the environment)
    iv. Why protecting water sources matters for people and ecosystems

Teaching note — You do not need to go into technical detail. Focus on helping students understand the journey of water from its source, through their community, and back to the environment. Before the lesson, a simple online search for your community's drinking water source and wastewater system can provide the local information you need.

1. **Think–Pair–Share**
    a. Now shift the discussion from where water comes from to how people depend on and connect with water.
    b. **Think:** Students independently think of ways water is used or valued in their homes, school, community, and daily lives.
    c. **Pair:** Students share their ideas with a partner and discuss where each example might fit.
    d. **Share:** Invite pairs to contribute their ideas to a class chart.

Create a 3-column chart to record students answers.

Home & School	Work & Community	Fun & Culture
Drinking, washing, cooking	**Firefighting, farming, businesses, power**	**Swimming, skating, fishing, ceremonies, recreation**

Have one final conversation as a class: *Looking at our chart, why does it matter where our water comes from and what happens to it after we use it?*

Activity 2: All About Water

Video Viewing: Watch a short video about freshwater:
The Basics of Freshwater: Crash Course Kids 14.1

Student task: After watching, students share one thing they learned about the importance of freshwater. Optional prompt: “Something that surprised me about water was…”

Activity 3: Water in Our Lives – Station Rotation

Purpose: Help students explore where water comes from, who depends on it, and the different ways people and ecosystems are connected to water. Students consider how human actions can affect water and why caring for freshwater is a shared responsibility.

Activity Steps:

1. Give each student a **Water in Our Lives worksheet**.
2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group to a starting station.
3. Have groups rotate through the three stations, spending approximately **10 minutes at each**.
4. Students work together to explore the station resources and complete the corresponding section of their worksheet.

Station 1: Follow the Water
Focus: Where water comes from and what can Impact it’s journey?

Station 2: Who Uses Water
Focus: How people and ecosystems depend on water

Station 3: Culture and Water
Focus: Relationships with and responsibilities to water

Activity 4: My Water Memory

Purpose: Give students an opportunity to reflect on a positive memory or personal connection they have with water and express what makes that experience meaningful to them.

Activity Steps:

1. Ask students to think of a positive memory involving water. This could be a favourite place, activity, experience, or moment with family or friends.
2. Students can choose one of the following:
   a. **Option 1: Draw**
      Students draw a picture representing their water memory. For example, it could show:
      - A favourite lake, river, creek, beach, or other water place
      - A favourite activity involving water
      - A memorable experience with family or friends
   - Students can cut out their finished drawing and, **if they choose, include it with their Pen Pals letter.**
3. **Option 2: Write**
   Students write a short description of their water memory, including:
   - What happened
   - Where they were
   - Who they were with, if anyone
   - Why the memory is special to them

Reflection Prompt: *Why is this water memory important to you?*

Optional Activity 5: Bringing It Together

Purpose: Help students connect their learning and recognize why water matters to people, communities, cultures, and ecosystems.

Activity Steps:

1. Bring the class together for a short discussion. Use questions such as:
   a. Where does the water we use come from, and where does it go after we use it?
   b. Who and what depends on the same water sources we do?
   c. What are some different ways people connect with and value water?
   d. How can what happens in one part of a water system affect another part?
   e. Why is it important to care for the water we share?
2. Encourage students to make connections between their own lives, their

community, other water users, and the ecosystems around them.

Student Takeaway: *Water connects people, communities, and ecosystems, and we all have a role in caring for it.*

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Water in Our Lives Worksheet

Name and Date: _____

Station 1: Follow The Water

Look closely at the “Where Does Our Water Come From?” graphic. Follow the water from its source to the community. Use what you see in the graphic and what you already know to answer the questions below. It’s okay if you are unsure, just make your best prediction!

1. I notice...
What is one thing you notice about where water comes from or how it reaches a community?

_____

2. I wonder...
What is something the graphic makes you curious about?

_____

3. Where do you think your community’s water comes from?
Think about the water around where you live. Make your best prediction.

_____

4. Why might communities across Canada get their water from different sources?
Think about how communities and the environments around them might be different.

_____

5. What would you like to know about water in your community?
Write one question you would ask someone who knows about your local water system.

_____

Station 2: Who Uses Water?

1. **How is water used by each of the following? Try to think of more than one example each.**

People: _____

Animals: _____

Plants: _____

Jobs/services: _____

2. **Think about your community.**

Where do you think a lot of water might be used in your community and why?

_____

_____

3. **What is one water use your group thinks other groups might not think of**

_____

Station 3: Culture and Water

- Read the short passage about Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on water and complete the reflection below.

  Water is important because...

Station 1: Follow The Water



Every community needs water, but not every community gets it in the same way. Water may come from rivers, lakes, reservoirs, or groundwater. The way water is treated, stored, and delivered can also look different depending on where people live.

Once water reaches a community, it has many different uses. We use water in our homes and schools, but water is also important for businesses, agriculture, industry, recreation, ecosystems, and many other parts of community life.

Worksheet Tips

Not sure what to write? Discuss the questions with your group and use what you already know to make your best prediction.

- Are there any large rivers, lakes, or other water sources near your community? Could your water come from one of them?
- Think about the geography around you. What water sources can you see or know about?
- Do you think a community in Newfoundland and Labrador might get its water differently than a community in British Columbia? Why or why not?
- How might geography, such as mountains, lakes, rivers, coastlines, or groundwater, affect where a community gets its water?
- Do you live in a big city, a small town, or a rural area? How might where you live affect where your water comes from and how it reaches you?

Station 2: Who Uses Water

Water is essential to life and to our communities. Some water users are easy to think of, while others may be less obvious.

Think about where you live and then and think about all the different ways water might be needed.

Think About...

- **People** — Where do people use water throughout their day?
- **Animals** — Where might animals find and need water?
- **Plants** — How do plants depend on water?
- **Jobs & services** — What jobs, businesses, or community services might need water to do their work?

Look Beyond the Obvious

Water is used in more places than you might first think. Consider your home, school, neighbourhood, natural areas, local businesses, farms, parks, and community services.

As a group, see how many different water uses you can come up with.

Challenge: Can you think of a water user or water use that other groups might not think of?

Station 3: Culture and Water

- Read the passage carefully.
- Use your worksheet to reflect on why water is important to many Indigenous Nations and their communities.

Indigenous Peoples & Water

For many Indigenous Nations across what is now Canada, water is much more than a resource—it is a source of life, connection, and responsibility. Rivers, lakes, wetlands, and coastal waters have supported communities for thousands of years by providing food, transportation, and places for gathering, learning, and ceremony.

Many Indigenous Nations have knowledge systems and teachings that describe water as a living relative and emphasize the responsibility to care for it. While these teachings vary among Nations, they often highlight the importance of protecting water because all people, plants, and animals depend on healthy freshwater ecosystems.

For generations, Indigenous Peoples have carefully observed and cared for local waterways, fish, plants, animals, and seasonal changes. This knowledge, passed down through families and communities, continues to guide stewardship and help people understand how to care for freshwater.

Today, Indigenous Nations continue to play an important role in protecting and managing rivers, lakes, wetlands, and watersheds. They lead and participate in water monitoring, habitat restoration, environmental research, education, and community stewardship, often working alongside other governments, scientists, and local organizations. Their ongoing efforts help protect freshwater for future generations.



Photo: David Stanley, *Fraser River* , Wikimedia Commons, **CC BY 2.0**.

My Water Memory

Water can be part of some of our favourite memories. Think about a positive memory you have involving water. It could be a favourite place, activity, experience, or moment with family or friends.

Option 1: Draw It

- Draw a picture of your water memory in the space below. You might draw:
  - A favourite lake, river, creek, beach, or other water place
  - Something you enjoy doing in or around water
  - A special experience with family or friends

Want to share it? You can cut out your drawing and include it with your Pen Pals letter.

Option 2: Write About It and use the questions below to help tell the story of your water memory.

What happened?

Where were you?

Who were you with?

What makes this memory special?