

Bullfrog Films presents...

Concerto for the Earth

Teacher's Guide

by Lisa J. Rudy

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Teacher's Guide for Concerto for the Earth

About the Film

"Concerto for the Earth" is a short film with a powerful message. The film was originally produced for large-format (70 mm) presentation at the Environmental Pavilion of the World's Fair in Seville, Spain, in 1992. In its original venue, it was viewed by thousands of people from all over the world.

"Concerto for the Earth" uses no words to tell its story. Instead, it relies on the musical form of the concerto to indicate a three part narrative. The first of the untitled movements, which might be called "The Living Planet," celebrates the beauty of the natural world. The second movement, which reflects the idea of "Nature Wounded," explores the ways in which human beings have injured the natural environment. The third movement offers a vision of sustainable development in which human beings act in harmony with nature.

Because this film was designed with a very broad audience in mind, it can be viewed by students with the understanding that it is not a "kids'" film--but a film with a message for all people. "Concerto for the Earth" is rich in images with both political and cultural content; the study guide includes suggestions for activities related to a range of curriculum topics. Whether it is used as a discussion piece or as a jumping off place for school-based or community activities, "Concerto for the Earth" will bring up thoughts and feelings about the future of our planet.

Using the Film in the Classroom

"Concerto for the Earth" is probably most useful as a general introduction to an environmental science class, an environmental unit in a social studies

class, or a discussion of media messages in a communications skills class. The film can also serve as a centerpiece for lessons on a variety of topics.

As you look through this guide, you'll see that it is broken into sections:

- Discussion questions and activity ideas for students in **grades 5-8**, for use before and after viewing the film.
- Discussion questions and activity ideas for students in **grades 9-12**, for use before and after viewing the film.
- **Recommendations for research projects** and activities designed to help students in grades 5-12 focus on and grasp the changing political and cultural issues portrayed in the film.
- **Resources for further exploration** of related topics.

We recommend that you view the film at least once before you show it to your class. Familiarize yourself with the film's form, and with the images used to present its message. For example, if you are using this film as a means to introduce a topic in social studies, you may want to focus on the film's presentation of human beings and their actions. If you are most interested in the film's use of images as communication, you may choose to focus on a few of the film's most powerful visual images.

You may choose to read through all of the discussion questions and activities outlined in this guide, and select those that you feel are best suited to your class. If you decide to engage your class in activities related to the film, you might want to collect any materials you will need before you get started.

Before Showing the Film

Select some discussion questions and/or activities from this guide to get your class thinking about the issues and techniques brought out in the film. Spend some time "warming up" to the film--preparation will help students to focus on the specific aspects of the film that relate to your curriculum goals.

After Showing the Film

It may be helpful to allow some general reaction time immediately following the film. Students may have strong responses they need to "get off their chests" before they can usefully focus on the discussion questions or activities you have planned.

Discussion Questions and Activities Grades 5-8

Before the Video

To help young students view the film attentively, it will be helpful to get them thinking about the notion of a "Concerto for the Earth." The following discussion questions and activities will help them better understand the film's concept and intent:

Discussion Questions:

- What is a concerto? What might a "Concerto for the Earth" be?
- What kinds of images would you expect to see in a Concerto for the earth? Why?
- What kinds of music might you use to accompany a Concerto for the Earth? Why?
- Why do you think a film called "Concerto for the Earth" might be shown at the World's Fair?

Activity Ideas:

- Play the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" segment of the film Fantasia. After viewing the film, have your class work together to tell the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice in words. Write the words down on the board, so that the full story emerges. Is the story as interesting when it is told in words? Does it hold your attention as well? Does it make you care about the apprentice as much? What is the role of music in the "Sorcerer's Apprentice?" Suggest to your students that they watch for the use of images and music in "Concerto for the Earth."
- Create an Earth Web: start by putting the word "Earth" in the middle of a large poster, then brainstorm

connecting ideas--e.g., Earth...sky...clouds... rain....water...etc. Notice the breadth of ideas connected to the one word. Discuss the importance of the central theme of "Earth." To carry the activity further, have students write or draw a story or picture to illustrate their feelings about the words brought out in the web.

After the video

Discussion Questions

- What feelings did this film bring out in you? Why?
- What thoughts did this film bring out in you? Why?
- A concerto has three "movements." Did this film have three "movements?" Where does each movement begin and end?
- Does this film tell a story?
- Do you think the film showed "good guys" and "bad guys?" Which were which? Why?
- Do you think that the film was correct about "good guys and bad guys?" Why or why not?
- Who were the children shown in the last image of the film? Why were they shown?
- Does this film make you want to take action in some way? Based on this film, what kinds of actions could young people take?

Activity Ideas

- Put three large pieces of paper up on the wall. Have the students list images they remember from each section of the film, and write them on the appropriate piece of paper. Discuss what each set of images has in common, and how the three movements move the story along.
- Work together as a class to write a script for the film. If you like, you can work from the lists of images developed in activity one. Ask for volunteers to narrate the film, and run the film again with narrative accompaniment. At the end of the film, ask the class for their response: how was the experience of watching the film with narration different from the experience of watch-

ing the film without words? Which experience was more powerful? Why?

- Break the class into three groups and have each group create a "pristine nature," "nature in crisis" or "nature being healed" project based on images from their region. Depending upon your school's location and resources, the project could be a collage of drawings and magazine images, a photo-journalistic creation or a video. Have each group present their project to the other groups.

- Have the class break into groups or pairs to explore the differences between this film's presentation of environmental issues and television's presentation of the same issues. Have each group or pair, as homework, watch and report on at least two television programs and four advertisements. Have them look for television shows that focus on the environment (Captain Planet, National Geographic Explorer, etc.) and for shows that ignore, misrepresent, or denigrate the environment.

When watching ads, have students look for a variety of environmental messages (cars, which pollute, can take you into the pristine wilderness; "all natural" foods make you environmentally conscious; etc.). If possible, have group present their findings on video-cassette with an accompanying report. Have reporting groups refer back to the film as a point of reference: how different is television? Why do you think these differences exist? How do you feel about these differences? Do you think people will act on the images they see on television? Why or why not?

- Discuss the idea of "thinking globally and acting locally" with your class. If feasible, assign groups the task of identifying local environmental issues and projects. Once you have developed a list of possible issues to address and/or projects to join, work with students to select from among the options for a class project. Having come up with several possibilities, work as a class to choose one or two to follow through on. Once selections are made, develop plans for following through--and take action.

Discussion Questions and Activities Grades 9-12

Before the Video

Discussion Questions

- What kinds of political messages would you expect from a film called "Concerto for the Earth?" Why?
- How do you feel about the messages you expect to see?
- This film was produced for a large-format venue at the World's Fair. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a music-only film in a large format for this setting?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of producing a film for such a diverse audience?

Activity Ideas

- Before viewing this film, work together in groups to create audio-visual presentations entitled "Concerto for the Earth." Use slides, video, sound, song, theater--but keep each presentation to 5 minutes. Present your rationale for the images and ideas you selected along with the actual presentation. Allow class members to ask questions of each performing group.
- Collect and display as many images of the Earth as you can find, concentrating on multi-cultural research. Find images ranging from "Earth from Space" to a variety of creation myths. Together, analyze what these images have in common--and how and why they differ.

After the video

Discussion Questions

- What feelings did this film bring out in you? Why?
- What thoughts did this film bring out in you? Why?
- A concerto has three "movements." What were the three "movements" in this film? How do the "movements" help to create narrative flow?
- What political statement was being made by this film? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

- Did any images in this film stand out in your mind? Which ones, and why?
- How do you think an international audience might have responded to this film? How would an audience of Central American people respond? How would an audience of disadvantaged Americans respond? How would an audience of wealthy Americans respond? Where do you fit in this spectrum? Do you think that people of different ages would respond differently to this film? Why?
- Do you feel that any of the images in this film are stereotyped? Which ones, and why?
- What changes would you make if you were making this film--for the same purpose, and with the same message?

Activity Ideas

- Go through this film slowly, and take notes on the images shown. Allow the class to categorize the images as they see fit--possibilities may include "negative images" (factories belching smoke) and "positive images" (waterfalls in a pristine setting); "narrative scenes" (a family gets into a car, drives past bikers into the wilderness, etc.) and "non-narrative scenes" (animals in the Serengeti) etc. Have the class work together to analyze the filmmaker's technique in selecting and piecing together images for different purposes.
- Allow the class to select two or three very distinctive pieces of music to play along with the film. Turn off the sound on the video, and play the film to the accompaniment of music chosen (or played) by the class. Discuss the impact of the music: Was there a difference in the feeling expressed by the film when (for example) it was shown to rock music? What made the difference?
- Rent (or borrow) and show films with a message similar to that of "Concerto for the Earth." (Options for such films include "Green Animation," which contains a range of short non-narrated films, and "Making a Difference," which is a narrated film on the same topic as

"Concerto." See the Resource section for further information and additional options.) Compare the films to one another: How does a non-verbal film compare to a film with narration? How are the same ideas expressed differently? Which techniques are most effective? Why?

- Have the class break into groups or pairs to explore the differences between this film's presentation of environmental issues and television's presentation of the environment. Have each group or pair, as homework, watch and report on at least two television programs and four advertisements. Instead of focusing on shows and ads that are overtly concerned with the environment, have them look for environmental themes and images in ordinary productions. Remind students that, especially in ads, messages can be very subtle (this beer is a part of the clean, pristine Rocky Mountains; etc.).

Have each group or pair make a report to the class about findings. If possible, allow reporting groups to present their discoveries on videocassette. Reports should refer back to the film as a point of comparison: How differently does television treat the environment and human relations to the natural world? Are there many similarities? What are the social, environmental, and political implications of your findings?

- Take on a local environmental issue that concerns the class. This can be a national issue (such as federal laws governing air pollution), a regional issue (such as a corporation's pollution of a river), or a local issue (such as the trash in a nearby park). Together, plan an appropriate action and follow through on it. Afterwards, analyze the effectiveness of the action. If the action is felt to have been ineffective, consider taking a different approach to the same issue. If there is strong interest in environmental action, consider working with your group to start up an environmental action club or group in your school or community.

Research Suggestions

As administrations and conditions change, attitudes and actions may vary. In the last ten years, for example, television, advertising and movies have focused on the idea of the polluter as the villain--though the United States as a nation has been slow to join other First World nations in taking real action in support of the global environment.

To help your class gain the most up-to-date information about environmental issues, it is helpful to assign research projects. The projects, of course, must be on the students' own level--and must focus on the topics most important to your curricular concerns.

The following are some suggestions for research topics and activities. The Resource section lists some books, videos, and organizations to help your students in their work.

Environmental Science Research Topics

- Toxic Waste
- Deforestation/Reforestation
- Biodiversity
- Water Resources
- Air Pollution
- Ecosystems
- Human Population

Environmental Science Activity Ideas

- Develop an annotated map of the world showing where and how fast pollution is occurring and being cleaned up; deforestation and reforestation is occurring; species are becoming extinct or being reintroduced; etc.
- Write a narrative for "Concerto for the Earth" that relates facts to images. For example, "Electric cars have been prototyped that can actually run on solar power," etc. Have a volunteer read it aloud as the film is shown.

Social Studies Research Topics

- Social Justice
- Poverty
- Access to Resources
- History of Technology
- Cultural Attitudes Towards Nature

Social Studies Activity Ideas

- Based on the last image in the film, write a short story about the contrast between middle class American resources and values and Central American resources and values. Choose one of the teenagers in the car and one of the poor children at the dump as main characters in the story.
- Divide the class in half for a debate. Have both classes research the proposition: "Developing nations should be allowed the same access to natural resources as first world nations have had over the past century." Hold a class debate in which one side upholds the idea that the environment should be preserved at all costs while the other side argues that developing nations should have the right to exploit their own land for economic reasons.

Communications Skills Research Topics

- Impact of Images on Society
- Importance of Television to Attitudes
- Use of language and images to slant responses
- Photo, Radio, and Tele-journalism
- Advertising and its impact

Communications Skills Activity Ideas

- Assign the task of finding magazine images (without words) that say: "cigarettes (or alcohol) can help you connect to the natural world," "Beauty can only be achieved through excessive spending," "You can help save the world if you buy our product," and "Our organization cares about the environment." Post and discuss the images. How do they achieve their goals? Do the images affect you as viewers? Why or why not?

- Assign the task of finding a television news story that takes a particular point of view on a political issue. Show the videotapes and discuss how and why they are successful.

Further Resources

Magazines

Science News

Grades 6 to Adult
Science Service, Inc.
1719 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Green Teacher

95 Robert Street
Toronto, ONT M5S 2K5
Canada
416/960-1244

E Magazine

P.O. Box 6667
Syracuse, NY 13217

WorldWatch

1776 Massachusetts Ave.
Washington DC 20036

Internation Wildlife

Grades 6-12
National Wildlife Federation
1412 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Buzzworm's Earth Journal

P.O. Box 6853
Syracuse, NY
13217

National Geographic World

Grades 3-8
National Geographic Society
17th and M Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Earth Island Journal

Earth Island Institute
300 Broadway, Suite 28
San Francisco, CA 94133

Books for Teachers and Students

Fifty Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth and Fifty More Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth by the EarthWorks Group (EarthWorks Press, 1989 and 1990)

Going Green: A Kid's Handbook to Saving the Planet by John Elkington and Julia Hailes (Viking, 1990)

Save the Earth: An Action Handbook for Children by Betty Miles (Knopf, 1991)

Save Our Planet: 750 Ways You Can Help Clean Up the Earth by Diane MacEachern (Dell, 1990)

State of the World The WorldWatch Institute

World Resources 1994-1995--A Guide to the Global Environment World Resources Institute

Organizations

The Environmental Exchange

A support group for groups tackling environmental issues

1930 18th Street NW

Washington, DC 20009

(202)387-2182

Kids F.A.C.E.

Publishes a newsletter with suggestions for projects students can do to help the earth and information on how to form local chapter clubs

P.O. Box 158254

Nashville, TN 37215

Environmental Defense Fund

257 Park Avenue South

New York, NY 10010

(212)505-2100

National Audubon Society
700 Broadway
New York, NY 10022
(212) 797-3000

Greenpeace
1436 U Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202)462-1177

The Sierra Club
Public Affairs
730 Polk Street
San Francisco CA 94109
(415)776-2211

Rainforest Action Network
450 Sansome Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94133
(415)398-4404

The Wilderness Society
1400 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 842-3400

Friends of the Earth
218 D Street SE
Washington DC 20003
(202)554-2600

Clean Water Action Project
733 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202)457-1286

Zero Population Growth
1400 16th St. NW
Suite 320
Washington DC 20036
(202)332-2200

North American Association for Environmental
Education
P. O. Box 400
Troy, OH 45373

Natural Resources Defense Council
40 West 20th St.
New York, NY 10011
(212)727-2700

Environmental Protection Agency
Public Information Office
401M Street, SW
Washington, DC 20460
(202)260-2090

Related Bullfrog Videos

FOR EARTH'S SAKE

This award-winning 59-minute film profiles the life and work of America's leading environmentalist, David Brower.

GREEN ANIMATION

This collection of 11 animated films about the environment will allow students to see how other film makers use image and music to make a statement.

HOW TO SAVE THE EARTH

This series of six videos presents individuals from around the world who are working to save our planet's environment.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Like "Concerto," this film documents the environmental damage inflicted on our planet, and shows how concerned groups are making a difference.

ONE SECOND BEFORE SUNRISE

Lynn Redgrave hosts this unique series focusing on solutions to environmental problems.

OUR PLANET EARTH

This film gives a spectacular perspective of Earth from the vantage point of space.

REPLANTING THE TREE OF LIFE

An inspiring reminder of the essential part trees play in our lives and in the life of the environment.



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