

Words All Around Us

Content Focus: Language Arts Topic and Assignment

Materials



Photographs, magazine pictures, product labels, and other examples of environmental print



Scissors



Whiteboard or easel and marker; or chalkboard and chalk



Glue



Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

This project focuses on environmental print—the words that students see all around them every day. Students identify examples of environmental print such as street signs, product labels, signs on and in buildings, billboards, road maps, words printed on commercial vehicles, and so forth. Students choose an example of environmental print to present to the class as an opening.

During this project students will:

- Sign in on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or easel to demonstrate writing skills.
 - Learn about environmental print to help them understand that printed words carry a message.
- Observe and identify environmental print.
 - Choose an example of environmental print for a project.
 - Create a visual (such as a drawing, cutout, or photograph) of printed text that can be found in our living environment.
 - In writing, describe the environmental print, what it means, and where it might be found.
 - Present an opening describing their environmental print.

Student Handout

- Words All Around Us

Content Standards*

1. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative

language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

2. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Idea for Introducing the Opening

Show students photos you've taken of environmental print from the school neighborhood to use as examples that students may recognize.

Project Steps

1. Determine at what level your students are prepared to examine and interact with environmental print. This project may be used with preemergent, emergent, or developing readers by adjusting the difficulty or complexity of the print students are asked to work with.
2. Give students opportunities to observe and identify environmental print:
 - Bring in photographs, magazine pictures, product labels, and other examples of environmental print and have students tell where someone might see each example and what it means.
 - Give students an assignment to bring in their own examples of environmental print in the form of magazine and newspaper pictures, photographs, or actual product labels, and talk about them in class: Where might they see each example? What does it mean?
 - Go for “print walks” outside and have students point out environmental print and tell what it means.
3. Tell students that for their opening they will each choose an example of “words all around us” to present to the class. Have them look through the materials you have gathered and select an example of environmental print to cut out or draw. You may also give students

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the option of finding examples on their own if you think it's appropriate.

4. Decide what your expectations will be for the written and visual parts of the assignment. Hand out the Words All Around Us form and model how the form should be completed. The template includes four places to record information:
 - *"This is a picture of"*: Students complete this statement by telling what kind of environmental print they will show on the handout. For example, they might write: "a stop sign," "a cereal box," "a soup can," "an advertising sign," or "a sign on the school."
 - *Blank space for a picture*: Students cut out a picture from a magazine or newspaper to paste in this space; or they may make a drawing, use a photograph, or print an image from clip art or the Internet.
 - *"The words in this picture mean"*: Students finish this statement by explaining what the environmental text means. For example, they might write: "cars should stop," "the can has chicken noodle soup in it," "there is a furniture sale this week," or "the school is named Thomas Jefferson School."
 - *"You could find these words"*: Students finish this statement by telling where in their environment people might see the words in the picture. For example, they might write "at a street corner," "in the grocery store," "in front of a school," "on a billboard," or "on the side of a bus."
5. Schedule class time for students to complete their Words All Around Us templates and prepare their openings. Preparation time will vary depending on your expectations and the readiness of your students. In general, this project should require no more than about one hour of class time prior to students making their presentations. This time is typically spread over several days. You may also assign some of the work as homework.
6. When the templates are finished, collect them and check for quality, using the guidelines and expectations you have given to students

as criteria. After checking for quality, return the templates to the students with any comments or feedback that you wish to provide before the openings are presented. These templates are the students' final visual aids, so do not write or mark directly on them unless you expect them to redo the work.

7. Communicate with parents about the upcoming opening, to inform them about the theme being covered and the requirements of students when making an opening. Ask them to practice with their children at home. (See pages 60–63 for parent letters to adapt.)
8. As needed, model part or all of a "Words All Around Us" opening for the class. Demonstrate how to present the information in sequence ("This is a picture of a sign. The words mean . . . You could find this sign . . .").
9. *Optional*: Have students who finish their projects early create a "Words All Around Us" sign or a poster-sized example of environmental print to serve as a backdrop to the opening presentations.
10. Make copies of the assessment form on page 206. Complete a form for each student after he or she has presented an opening.
11. Proceed with "Words All Around Us" openings as you have planned them. Have students write their names on the board before they introduce themselves to the class. As necessary, prompt children to fulfill the key elements of the opening as they make their presentations.

Ideas for Extending or Modifying the Opening

1. Engage students in a treasure hunt for the unusual or uncommon: Give them a challenge assignment to identify an example of environmental print that nobody else will think of or bring in.
2. Ask students to think about what is the same and what is different among examples of environmental print. For example, what is the same and what is different about "Stop," "Yield," and "Speed Limit 35" signs? (They are the same in that they are street signs and they tell drivers what to do; they're different



in that they tell drivers to do different things and have different shapes and colors.)

3. Have students classify environmental print. Give them categories such as these: found inside, found outside, advertising, product names, street signs. Ask students to tell in which category each example of environmental print belongs. Watch for “ah-ha!” moments when students realize that some examples may be classified in more than one way.
4. Create a display called “Words Around Our School.” Walk the school building and grounds with students and take pictures of every example of environmental print they can identify.
5. Create your own Words All Around Us templates on larger paper to give students more room to draw, paste pictures, or write. A simple way to do this is by photocopying the form at 200 percent on 11" x 17" paper.



Classroom Differentiation Example: Ms. Archer

Strategies: scaffolding, tiering

Ms. Archer has decided to use a basics-first approach with her students as they prepare for their opening projects. She has designated class time when they will work on their written and visual materials. At the end of this time, the students will show her what they have done. Students know that if their basic assignments need more work, Ms. Archer will provide whatever support (scaffolding) is needed to complete them. However, if a student is ready to go, he or she will be allowed to extend the project beyond the basics. Here are three examples:

Sammi has struggled with the assignment. She understands the concept of environmental print, but the task of finding an example and explaining in writing what it means has proven to be quite difficult for her. After examining what she has done, Ms. Archer asks Sammi to meet with her for guided support to complete the project before presenting it. Understanding that Sammi needs help with the writing expectation, Ms. Archer allows her to dictate what she wants to say in order to complete the assignment.

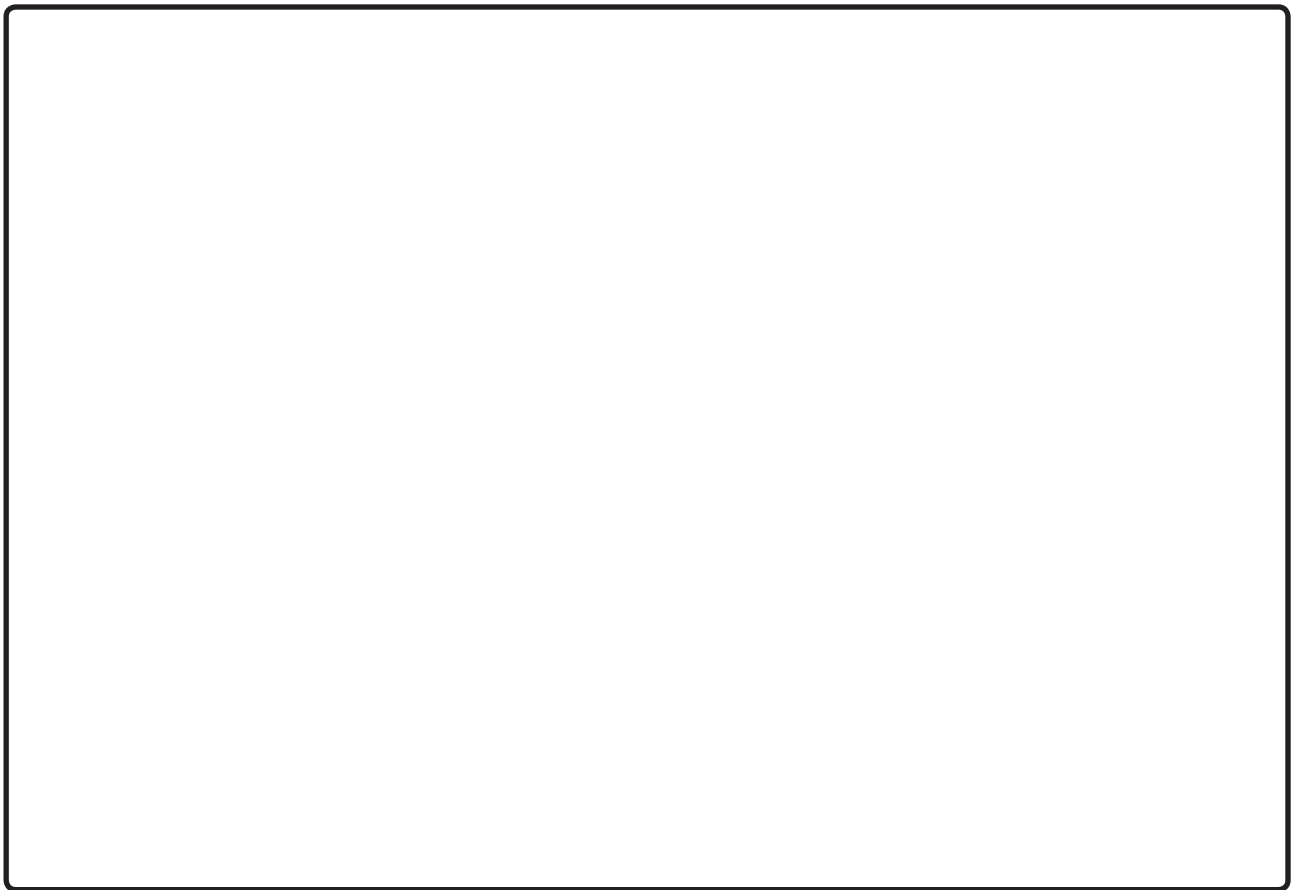
Dmitri has finished the project requirements, but it is not evident that he completely understands the concept of environmental print. Ms. Archer’s judgment is that he could benefit from continuing to focus on the basic elements of the project. As a result, she gives Dmitri two very specific project extension options that he may choose from and asks him to work with a parent volunteer to build at least one of them into his project.

LaTasha has finished the assignment with a high level of quality and an obvious mastery of the concept. Ms. Archer tells LaTasha to choose any of the options provided on a list of extension ideas and include them in her presentation.

Words All Around Us

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

This is a picture of _____.



The words in this picture mean _____

_____.

You could find these words _____

_____.