



SPEAK FOR THE TREES, Boston

TreeBoston.org | @Trees_Boston | trees@treeboston.org

Benefits of Urban Trees

Grades: 6th - 8th

Setting: Indoor Activity

Purpose of Lesson: Students will be able to learn the importance of a strong urban forest, define urban forestry, gain an understanding of the benefits of trees, and define the context of redlining.

Essential Questions:

- What is an urban forest?
- Why are trees important in urban environments?
- What is redlining and how do we see its effects today?

Materials: Google slides, paper, coloring utensils (markers, pencils, crayons)

Program Session Schedule [~2 hours]:

Self Introduction & Group Check-ins: 10 mins

Icebreaker: 10 mins

Discussion of lesson topic: 30 mins

Activity: 20 mins

Review & Wrap-Up: 10 mins

Lesson Implementation

Self Introduction & Group-Check-ins (10 mins): Take this time to introduce ourselves and our organization. Who we are, what we do, and our goal for today's lesson. Use this time to let the students share their names and grades as well.

Icebreaker (10 mins): Use this time to allow students to share their

Guided Discussion (30 mins): Use the slides as a guided set of instructions and questions to share with the class. The goal here is to allow students to begin thinking about how trees are seen when living in an urban environment. Sharing their thoughts about these questions acts as an opener to discussing why trees are specifically important to urban spaces.

- To make the discussion more engaging we could have students volunteer to write their shared answers on the board or write them on sticky notes so we could share them out loud.

Ask the students to think, write, and share:

- What does an urban forest look like?
 - A forest, or collection of trees, that grow in a city
- Can you define an urban forest?
 - Come in many different shapes and sizes, they include urban parks, street trees, landscaped boulevards, gardens, rivers, greenways, natural preserves, wetlands, etc.
 - Provide valuable ecosystem services, such as air pollution removal, carbon storage, oxygen production, and runoff prevention.



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- Why are trees important in urban environments? Why do we need trees?
 - Trees allow us to clean our air out, allow us to cool our neighborhoods, and improve our mental health and physical health (show the images on the slides!)

*Keyword: *Urban Heat Island Effect* = When heat is trapped in the concrete of the cities, this leads to cities releasing greenhouse gasses and air pollution and an increase in temperature is experienced.

- What is redlining?
 - A discriminatory policy that withholds resources and functioning from neighborhoods is considered “hazardous” to investment. Designed to harm racial and ethnic minorities and low-income residents
- How do we see its effects today? What do you see in these images, are there any trends?
 - Show an example image of redlining from the Google slides
 - These effects of redlining are seen today in several underserved communities throughout multiple cities. This includes Boston!

Activity (20 mins): Students will draw a picture that displays “ a tree in action”. This picture should show the benefit being provided by a tree. Some examples could look like a tree on the street reducing heat, cleaning the air, or someone picking up fruit from a tree. (An example of this picture is on the slide as well)



Review & Wrap-Up (10 mins): Allow students to show what they each drew and have a few share their work for a group discussion.

Reflection questions:

- What did you draw and why?
- What benefits do you view as most important in your community?
- In what ways do you think Redlining has most harmed poor communities and communities of color?
- What else did you learn today?