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EVERYTHING COMES FROM SOMETHING

Grade: 4, 5, 6

Subject: Geography, language arts, economics

Overview:
Students and their families use a multitude of products every day. These products are manufactured in part or entirely from natural resources. In this lesson students will learn about renewable and nonrenewable resources and trace resources' points of origin by constructing and analyzing a product map.

Objectives:
Students will understand the characteristics of renewable and nonrenewable resources; and know several examples of each.

Time: Two hours

Materials Required:

- Wall map of the world
- Atlas, globe, encyclopedia, and almanac
- Markers or crayons
- Pieces of drawing paper
- Index cards
- Tape

S u g g e s t e d P r o c e d u r e

Opening:
Define "resources" for your students. A resource is an aspect of the physical environment that people value and use. A renewable resource can be regenerated if used carefully. A nonrenewable resource cannot be replaced once it is used up. Ask students to give examples of important natural resources.

Read this passage by the poet Carmen Agra Deedy:

Everything comes from something,
Nothing comes from nothing.
Just like paper comes from trees,
And glass comes from sand.

Development:
Using the example "paper comes from trees," ask students to create an illustration that shows both paper and trees. Research where the paper your students use is made and where the trees used to make it were grown. Place student illustrations on the map in those locations.

Divide the class into groups of two. Let each pair choose a product to research. [Note: For very young students, you might want to research one or two products as a class.]

Each student group should identify the resources used to make their chosen product. A pencil makes a good example. This product typically includes several natural resources, including wood and the bases for dyes in paint. Assist the students as they learn about the resources in their product. Research should determine the resources used to make the product, whether the resources are renewable or nonrenewable, and where each resource is found. Have students record the following information about their product on index cards:

- Name of product
- Name of a natural resource used in the product
- Is this a renewable or nonrenewable resource?
- Where does this resource come from?

When research is complete, students should create a symbol that represents each resource. They should make two copies of each symbol—one to put on the large world map and the other for the map key.

Closing:
Have each student group place its symbol on the map. Add the other symbol to the map key with a description. Then ask each group to give an oral presentation about its product and the resources used to manufacture it.

Suggested Student Assessment:
Have each student demonstrate his or her understanding by creating a pamphlet that explains which resources are essential to sustaining life in the United States today and which will be essential in the future. Students should include both renewable and nonrenewable resources and explain the difference. Which resources are local and which must be imported? Where do the imported resources originate?