

How to be flood smart – Sharing information through public service announcements

Subject/Topic

Natural disasters, geography, flood preparedness and response

Time

60 minutes (can be adapted for multiple classes)

Grade Levels

Elementary (grades 5-8)

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to analyze an infographic and compile the main message and most pertinent information.
- Students will be able to prepare for a flood in their community and be proactive if flooding is in the forecast.
- Students will be able to communicate flood safety strategies.

Materials

- FloodSmart Canada infographic
- Infographic discussion questions sheet
- Optional: stopwatches

Overview

Students will use the FloodSmart Canada infographic to learn about what actions to take before, during, and after a flood. Students will then act out Public Safety Announcements (PSAs) to demonstrate their learning.

Focus questions

How can we prepare for and respond to a flood? What are the key aspects about flooding that everyone should know?

Lesson Description

Minds on: Students will work in groups as they read the FloodSmart Canada infographic, which is designed to help students understand how people can prepare for and respond to a flood in their community. Students will discuss their own experiences with flooding or their perception of flooding gained from the media/books/movies.

Action: Each group will summarize what they understood from the infographic, focusing on new knowledge gained about flood risks and preparedness. Students will then use this knowledge to act out a short public service announcement (PSA) based on what they have learned.

Conclusion: Students will share their PSAs with the rest of the class and discuss what they have learned.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on: Introduce the concept of natural disasters in your classroom, and have students share what they know about natural disasters in general (e.g., types, causes, impacts, frequency, location). Visually brainstorm ideas by using a tree graph to branch out ideas based around themes. Next, have students discuss the natural disasters they think occur most frequently in Canada. Invite students who have previously experienced a natural disaster to talk about what happened, how they and their family reacted or were affected, and what took place after the event was over.

Explain to students that this lesson will focus on floods, which are the most common natural disaster in Canada. Discuss the characteristics of floods that your students may or may not have considered (e.g., what is the difference between a flood and a flash flood; floods can be caused by heavy rainfall during storms but also by rapid snow melt and dam failure; what are the different levels of severity of floods). Use this opportunity to answer any questions that students may have about flooding in Canada.

Next, divide students into groups of four or five and have them quietly read and discuss the FloodSmart Canada infographic. Ask students to highlight key words and determine what they feel is the main message of the infographic.



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Action: Remind students that the objective of an infographic is to communicate important information effectively using design elements in addition to text. Ask each group to fill out the Infographic discussion questions sheet. Have each group assign a leader who will share with the rest of the class the group’s impressions and understanding of the infographic based on their responses. Allow enough time for all group leaders to share their group’s thoughts, and work as a class to answer any questions that come up during the exercise.

Now that the class has developed an understanding of flood risks and awareness, inform the students that they will be creating a one-minute PSA to pass on their knowledge of the risks associated with floods, as well as what to do before, during and after a flood. Give each group enough time to design a PSA which they will perform for the rest of the class. Encourage students to be creative and to incorporate elements such as humour, singing, jingles or props, but ensure that the students are using the vocabulary and the main concepts presented in the infographic. The students can choose the characters and the storyline of their skits, and can choose to have a narrator or not. The skits should be informative and accurate, but memorable and captivating. The skits should be between one and two minutes long. Consider providing each group with a stopwatch to practice their skit and make sure it is not too long.

Clear a space in the classroom to give students the freedom to move around and act out their PSAs.

Conclusion: Once each group has presented their PSA, replace any tables, chairs or desks that were moved and invite the students back to their original seats. Discuss as a class the storylines presented in each PSA.

Consider choosing one or two PSAs that were particularly effective (or invite the class to vote on their favourites) and share them with the rest of the school. After the performances, have a select few students hand out a copy of the infographic to each class.

Extend Your Geographical Thinking

Discuss with students the recommendations made in FloodSmart Canada infographic and encourage students to build an emergency kit with their families. To help students get started, work as a class to create a list of the types of flood risks in your area, research your community’s warning/alert system, and make a list of important radio/TV stations, social media channels, websites and phone numbers. Ask students if they would add any additional items to their emergency kits. Learn about suggested evacuation routes and shelter plans for your community.

Modifications

Instead of asking students to perform PSAs, invite a city official to give a presentation to the class about flood risks and preparedness. Alternatively, organize an event during which students can present their PSAs to city council members.

For classes interested in doing a longer skit that resembles a short play rather than a PSA, assign students different roles and responsibilities, and create one presentation that can be shared with the school. Roles and responsibilities can include writing dialogue, set design, prop construction, narration, acting, singing and sound effects.

Consider creating index cards with scenarios of situations that may arise during a flood and ask students to describe out loud how they would respond or have them write their thoughts in a journal.

Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Spatial significance
- Patterns and trends
- Interrelationships

Inquiry Process

- Ask geographic questions
- Interpret and analyze
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Communicate

Geospatial Skills

- Location
- Direction
- Scale
- Visualization
- Observation
- Data collection



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Assessment Opportunities

Teachers can assess students' responses on the Infographic discussion questions sheet, and grade their level of comprehension of the information being presented.

Teachers can assess the PSAs developed by the students, taking into account planning, execution, creativity, accuracy and attention to detail.

Students can assess each other through group discussion and participation in the development of their PSA.

Sources and Additional Resources

- [Flooding in Canada](#)
- [FloodSmart Canada](#)
- [Partners for Action](#)