

**Age Level:**

Third grade and up

Subjects:

Social Studies
Language Arts

Time:

30 to 45 minutes

Materials:

- Pencils
- Copy of Word List sheet for each student
- (Optional) Copy of Word List Descriptions for each student

Learning Objectives:

- To understand specific words for recording the degree and strength of feelings as a basis for comparing surroundings
- To develop consideration for the opinions of others
- To introduce students to sustainable concepts in environments
- To understand techniques for recognizing and communicating feelings

Design Professional:

This activity will take some time so it might be best to let the teacher lead the activity. Some of the sustainable concepts/words might need some explaining or examples shown to the students.

Teacher:

This activity is an excellent one for the teacher to use. It introduces some new word concepts and can provide extensions in vocabulary development and spelling.

Rationale:

It is often a great revelation to people when they realize others do not perceive things in the same way they do. Working together in groups results in the consideration of the opinions of many people.

This requires people to become more aware of their own feelings and those of others. A format for evaluating these feelings and seeing things can help with this recognition and acceptance.

Presenting the Activity:

Typical dialogue might be...

“As an environment (your schoolroom, the whole school, your home or the community) is experienced, feelings develop about what is...

- *Seen: is it pretty or ugly?*
- *Heard: is it loud or quiet?*
- *Smelled: is it good or bad?*
- *Tasted: is it sweet or sour?*
- *Felt: is it rough or smooth?*

“Often not much attention is paid to these feelings or time taken to find the right words to describe them. A vocabulary is needed to express our feelings so that they can be communicated to others. Using a list of words can help us find a way to share our feelings with others.

“We are going to use a list of words as a way to record our feelings about this classroom. The list will help us discover that... even though the same environment is being observed, the feelings individuals have about it may be different:

- *Some will have stronger feelings than others.*
- *Some will see more than others.*

“This list can help us understand how strong or weak our feelings about spaces in our environment are and give us a basis for comparing them.”

Hand out copies of the Word List.

“Here is a list of adjectives that describe things you might have feelings about in this environment. Each line represents a pair of words or phrases that have opposite meanings. In between them is a series of five boxes. At the top, there are words heading each column.



“These are the words you will use to evaluate the pairs of adjectives.

“You are to evaluate each pair of adjectives in relation to this classroom (or any other environment that may be selected). In this case “evaluate” means to record what your feelings are. Are they strong or mild, or somewhere in between?

“For example, let’s do the first two words, ORDINARY and UNUSUAL. Do you feel this room is VERY ORDINARY? Is it like every other room you have seen that is used for this purpose? Or do you think it is SOMEWHAT ORDINARY? Do you think just a few things about it are different? Maybe you think the room is balanced evenly between ordinary and unusual – then your feelings are NEUTRAL. Perhaps you feel the room is SOMEWHAT or VERY UNUSUAL. You are saying it is different from other rooms used for this purpose, and you are evaluating just how different you think it is. When you have decided how you feel, fill in the box under the column heading you have selected. You are to fill in only one box in each row.”

Draw this example on the chalkboard:

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Ordinary

“The words may be new to you, or they may have different meanings in relation to the environment, so wait for the explanation before you fill in each line of boxes. Be careful not to say your selections out loud because we are going to compare our feelings later. You are recording your own special feelings. Don’t be concerned about whether your evaluation is right. There are no right or wrong answers. You are just recording what you feel about this environment.”

Go down the Word List giving explanations and reminding the students of the degrees of evaluation for each pair of words. When the list is completed, ask the students to get in groups of three or four. When

Unusual

the groups are ready, typical dialogue might be...

“Each group is to select one person to be a recorder. You will record only the times all of your group has exactly the same answer. That means you will record only the times you all agree about your feelings about this environment. Go down the list together with each person giving their answer for each line. Don’t discuss the answers, just record them. Record only the times when everyone agrees.”

Give one copy of the Word List sheet to each recorder. As the groups are recording, walk around and be sure each group understands what they are to do.

When the groups are finished, ask each group to tell you what their score is. Almost always it will be only two or three times that they all agree, maybe none at all!

“What have you found out about how people feel about the same environment? Right! Hardly anyone feels just the same way. Can you think of some reasons why this is the case?”

Typical answers are...

“The words mean different things to different people.”

“We see different things when we look at the same place.”

“We all have different places in mind that we are comparing this place to.”

“It might depend on how you are feeling at the time, or on the weather.”

Initiate a brainstorming session with the question...

“What does this tell us we need to do if we want to plan something in which we all participate, such as planning a city or a walking tour booklet about our community?”

Typical answers might be...

“We need to consider how everyone feels.”

“We need to know the right words to express our feelings.”

“When we plan a project in which we want everyone to participate, each of us should be responsible for listening to other people’s ideas, and we need to tell everyone about our own ideas.”

**Closure:**

“There is so much to see, even in just one room, that people very often get sort of numb to everything around them. They don’t use their senses to observe what an environment is really like. This list of words is just one way of helping people look carefully at an environment, evaluate what they see and use words to communicate their feelings to others.

“A list like this is what architects call a “notation system.” They use many different kinds of systems to record their observations of the things they see. Of course, the one they use most often is drawing pictures of what they see. Often a picture gives a much better idea of what you are talking about than words can.

“You may want to use the word list to evaluate another space. This room at another time or a room at home with your family. Add new words if you wish, but be sure to add the opposite word.

“After you have done this a few times, it can become a habit. Then you are on your way to becoming an intelligent environment observer!”

Suggestions for further exploration:

Use the list for a spelling lesson.

Use a selection of several words in a Language Arts lesson involving a description of the environment observed.

Have the class brainstorm new sets of words. Make up a new word sheet and use it on a different kind of observation – a neighborhood walk, for instance.

Use the list as a homework assignment for students to evaluate their room at home, their yard or some area of their choice.

Use the Word List Descriptions exercise to have students think about their own definitions of description words/phrases and how their definition of a word might differ from someone else’s. Why do they feel the way they do about those words? Why do they feel positive about some descriptions and negative or indifferent about others?

WORD LIST

How Do You Feel About This Environment?

NAME _____

DATE:	WHERE:					TIME OF DAY:
	Very	Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Very	
Ordinary						Unusual
Complex						Simple
Light						Dark
Modern						Old Fashioned
Noisy						Quiet
Attractive						Unattractive
Small						Large
Multi-purpose						Single-purpose
Bright						Dim
Open (Space)						Closed (Space)
Finished						Unfinished
Roomy						Crowded
Friendly						Unfriendly
Urban						Rural
Public						Private
Imaginative						Unimaginative
Like						Dislike
Warm						Cold
Fresh						Stuffy
Sunny						Shady
Natural (Lighting)						Artificial (Lighting)
Soft						Harsh
Comfortable						Uncomfortable
Efficient						Wasteful

WORD LIST DESCRIPTIONS*How Do You Feel About This Environment?*

NAME	DATE
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Describe each pair of words. Develop two pairs of your own and describe them at the end.

Complex	Simple
Multi-purpose	Single-purpose
Open space	Closed space
Daylighting	Artificial lighting
Urban	Rural
Public	Private
Adapt	Discard
Deciduous Trees	Evergreen Trees
Rain Water	Treated Water
Fossil Fuels (Nonrenewable)	Renewable Energy
Green Building	Conventional Building
Healthy	Toxic
Windy	Still/Stagnant
Recycle	Trash
Integrated	Disconnected
Symmetrical	Asymmetrical
Fun	Boring
Friendly	Unfriendly