



Teaching Young People About Foodprints

Young people are ready to learn that whether it's a salad, a juicy burger or their morning bowl of cereal, food comes from somewhere and has an impact on the environment, on animals and on people. Our "foodprint" is the result of everything it takes to get food from the farm to our plates.

To help foster learning about the concept of a foodprint, we have pulled together lessons, activities, book suggestions, video links and easy-to-understand graphics for all different ages and gathered resources from expert organizations who specialize in teaching young people about food, the environment, animal welfare, food justice and more.

Use these resources over a week, over a month, or however long you'd like, as an after school "elective" or just some weekend fun. Consider completing this "curriculum" by doing our "Reduce Your FoodPrint" [4-Week Challenge](#). We've even included merit badges for each section. Your child or student can "unlock" each downloadable badge by completing that unit and decoding the message using our cryptogram.



UNIT 1: The Story Behind Your Food

Food comes from somewhere besides a store. But it's easy for young people not to know that. Or to believe everything on their plates comes from happy, small, family farms. The first step for any person learning about our food system is to realize it's a system and to start digging a little deeper into where their food comes from.

- E MS HS Watch:** "What is a FoodPrint?" video.
- Watch:** "What's On Your Plate?", a documentary about two girls exploring their place in the food chain. Website contains resources to go alongside the film.
- Learn:** Take [FoodPrint's 3 minute, engaging and highly-unscientific quiz](#) to help you discover your foodprint and find resources to learn more.

- MS Learn:** [What's Really Happening on the Farm?](#) Students explore the impact that large-scale animal agriculture has on people, animals, and the planet. (From HEART, on Nearpod)
- Learn:** [Why We Eat What We Eat](#) Students delve into some of the complex internal and external factors that influence our food choices. (From HEART's Justice for All Secondary School Guide, pg. 163)

- MS HS Learn:** [Reflecting on Food: Food Choices](#), from Edible Schoolyard. This short reflection activity will help you think through your priorities when you make food choices.
- Read:** "[The Omnivore's Dilemma: Young Readers Edition](#)" This young readers' adaptation of Michael Pollan's famous food-chain exploration encourages kids to consider the personal and global health implications of their food choices.

- HS Watch:** Watch the movie "Food, Inc" and use [this discussion guide](#) from The Center for Ecoliteracy.
- Learn:** [FoodSpan Decoding Labels Lesson](#). Students will learn how to read and critically interpret common food labels, review who regulates and verifies the accuracy of these labels, and create their own food labels.
- Learn:** "[Your Favorite Meal](#)" A one hour lesson that introduces the idea of a food system, using young people's favorite meals as a way to start thinking about where our food comes from and how it is produced. (From The Food Project).

AGE RANGE KEY:

E Elementary School

MS Middle School

HS High School



UNIT 2: Animal Welfare

The main way in which we produce meat, eggs and other animal products has turned animals into units of production in a factory. Animals in so-called “factory farms” are treated terribly, subject to awful living conditions and then cruel deaths.

- E MS HS Watch:** “[The Meatrix](#)” Follow Leo, who wonders if he is “the one,” as he discovers the truth about factory farming in these series of innovative short, animated films spoofing “The Matrix” films.
- Do:** Go [Meatless on Mondays](#) and cut back on meat one day a week.
- E Learn:** [What’s Really Happening on the Farm?](#) Students consider who is most affected by the way factory farms are operated. (From HEART’s Justice for All K – 5 Guide, pg. 260)
- Learn:** [Friends on the Farm Lesson plan](#). Students learn about the basic needs and natural behaviors of farm animals and compare that to what their lives are like on factory farms (From HEART’s K-12 Humane Education Resource Guide, pg. 29)
- Read:** [A Day in the Life of Hens](#). Read two stories about hens and compare and contrast the experiences of both hens. (From HEART’s Justice for All K – 5 Guide).
- MS HS Do:** Look for meat or eggs that are from humanely raised animals: head to a farmers’ market and look for a meat vendor. Or head to the supermarket and [look for the labels](#) “Certified Humane”, “Animal Welfare Approved” or “American Humane Certified.”
- HS Learn:** Good Food Rising’s [Animal Welfare section](#), page 98. Includes two 35 minute activities and multimedia that help students understand the differences in quality of life for animals on factory farms versus farm animals who are raised in better, more humane conditions. (From Real Food Media)
- Read:** [Animal Welfare](#), a short paper from FoodPrint.



UNIT 3: Environmental Impacts of the Industrial Food System

Industrial food production takes a tremendous toll on our soil, air and water and is a driver of climate change.

- MS HS Learn:** Food and Climate Change: [An Interactive Guide from the Center for Ecoliteracy](#). Uses video, photography, text and interactive experiences to help educators, students and advocates learn how food and climate systems interact and how personal choices can make a difference.
- Read:** [11 Facts About Industrial Agriculture and the Environment](#), A quick read from DoSomething.org.
- HS Learn:** Good Food Rising’s [Environmental Impacts of the Food System section](#), page 68. Three 15 to 20 minute lessons, plus multimedia all with a focus on understanding the links between climate change and agriculture. (From Real Food Media)
- Learn:** [Animal Agriculture and the Environment](#). From Farm Sanctuary. Students will research and gather data on the impact that the rise in industrialized farming has on the environment and the far-reaching consequence that animal agriculture has on humans – and use the data to create an infographic. (From Farm Sanctuary)
- Read:** [How Industrial Agriculture Affects Our Water, How Industrial Agriculture Affects Our Soil, How Industrial Agriculture Affects our Air](#), short papers from FoodPrint.



UNIT 4: Who Makes Your Food?

The production of most of our food, from fruits and vegetables to meat and eggs, relies on human labor. The work is hard and largely underpaid and undervalued.

E Read: [“Right This Very Minute”](#) A table-to-farm book about food and farming, to inspire little ones to learn more about where their food comes from.

Read: [“Side by Side: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez”](#) and how they motivated farmworkers to fight for their rights and, in the process, changed history.

MS Read: [“Chew on This”](#) by Eric Schlosser. Addressing the same issues as Schlosser’s “Fast Food Nation”, the book focuses on the mistreatment of animals in slaughterhouses and of employees in restaurants; the shocking effects that too much fast food can have on growing bodies; and the impact of the industry on schools, communities and the earth.

MS HS Learn: Good Food Rising’s [Valued Workforce section](#), page 48. One 35 minute lesson that can be done separately, or as part of a longer lesson to help students understand the hands that feed us. (From Real Food Media)

Read: [“Strike! The Farm Workers’ Fight for Their Rights”](#) about the 1965 fight for justice in the fields by California grape pickers, in what turned out to be one of the longest and most successful strikes in American history.

Listen: [StoryCorps and Real Food Media audio pieces](#), first hand accounts from workers in the food chain.

HS Watch: Real Food Media’s Worker Stories Videos. [Use their Film Guide](#) to find the movies and use their discussion questions.

Read: [Labor and Workers in the Food System](#), a short paper from FoodPrint.

Read: [Learn about cherry pickers in Washington State, during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). as reported by The New York Times article.



UNIT 5: The Importance of Local Food

Food that is produced locally has a smaller footprint. Purchasing locally-grown food helps support local farms – and therefore the local economy – and maintains farmland and open spaces in your community. Also includes information about growing your own food!

E MSHS Do: [Seasonal Food Guide exploration](#). Find out what’s in season near you using FoodPrint’s Seasonal Food Guide and the linked Real Food Encyclopedia entries on those foods.

Do: Visit a farmers’ market, local farm stand, or [u-pick farm](#).

Do: Grow Your Own Food:

- [DIY Seed Starter Pots](#): lots of ideas for how to make seed starting pots out of various reusable materials.
- [Grow Food From Food Scraps](#). A lesson around growing foods from the leftover ends of scallions, lettuces and more. (From Edible Schoolyard)

MS HS Learn: [Seasonal, Local Food Lesson](#). One 50 minute lesson in which students research what produce grows in their area and in what season, and learn about the advantages and disadvantages of eating locally grown food. (From the Nourish Curriculum)

HS Learn: Good Food Rising’s [Local Economies section](#), page 86. A fun game and associated multimedia that takes about 1 hour and 20 minutes. (From Real Food Media)

Learn: [One hour Local Food Economy lesson](#). Players shop for items to make a spaghetti dinner, then discuss the true costs hidden in our food system. Handouts and worksheets included. (from The Food Project)

Read: [Local and Regional Food Systems](#), a short paper from FoodPrint.



UNIT 6: Food Waste

America wastes roughly 40 percent of its food. Of the estimated 125 to 160 billion pounds of food that goes to waste every year, much of it is perfectly edible and nutritious. Some is lost on the farm, some is lost in transportation, some in restaurants, but a whole lot is also wasted at home.

- E MS HS Do:** Have a discussion about — and maybe do an audit of — how and where you waste food and how you might do better.
 - **PBS Waste audit:** Sort a day's worth of trash from your home into different groups and graph what percentage can be recycled versus true trash to make greener choices.
 - **Learn:** [California Academy of Sciences' lesson](#) on collecting data on how much food you waste at each meal, analyzing the data and coming up with solutions.
- Do:** Start [a compost pile](#) (or easier, a stock freezer bag).
- E Watch:** [“Reducing Food Waste”](#) Learn about the impact of food waste on the environment in this video animation from WNET. Includes accompanying discussion questions and teaching tips. (from PBS' Kids Go Green)
- MS Learn:** With this [Edible Schoolyard's Compost Lesson](#) students will begin to understand the process of decomposition and learn about the organisms responsible for breaking down matter.
- HS Learn:** Using [Foodspan's Food Waste Lessons](#) students will learn why food waste is a problem and explore strategies to reduce it.
- Read:** [The Problem of Food Waste](#), a short paper from FoodPrint.



UNIT 7: Food Packaging

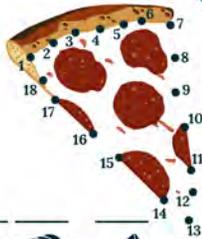
As our landfills and waterways are increasingly clogged with single-use plastic packaging like plastic bags, Styrofoam food containers, disposable coffee cups and more, it's clear that the convenience of food packaging is outweighed by the waste and pollution that the packaging leaves behind.

- E MS HS Read:** [“Drowning In Plastic”](#) A visualization report by Reuters investigating the world's addiction to plastic water bottles.
 - Read:** [How Long Does it Take Your Food Packaging to Degrade?](#)
 - Read:** [Simple Swaps Graphic](#) Explore how many swaps can you make at your house.
- MS HS Watch:** [“The Story of Plastic”](#) (either trailer or full movie)
 - Do:** Make a [reusable produce bag, bowl cover or sandwich bag](#).
- HS Read:** [The FoodPrint of Food Packaging](#), a deep-dive report from FoodPrint.
- Read:** [“Taking on the Plastics Crisis”](#) by Hannah Testa. In this personal essay, youth activist Hannah Testa shares with readers how she led a grassroots political campaign to successfully pass state legislation limiting single-use plastics.

UNIT 1: UNLOCKED!



You're on the way to reducing your impact now that you know your...



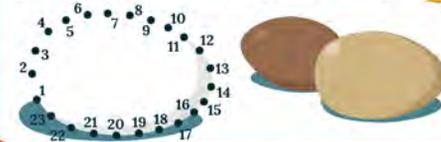
FoodPrint.

UNIT 2: UNLOCKED!



You are next level because you care about...

FoodPrint.



UNIT 3: UNLOCKED!



You're an environmental superhero because you choose labels that are better for the...

FoodPrint.



UNIT 4: UNLOCKED!



You are a rockstar because you value the people who...

FoodPrint.



UNIT 5: UNLOCKED!



You're a super genius because you understand that...

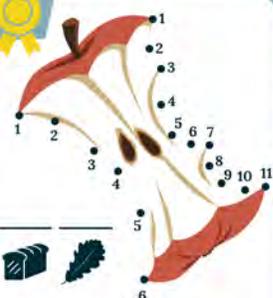
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UNIT 6: UNLOCKED!



You're a sustainability boss because you now know that...



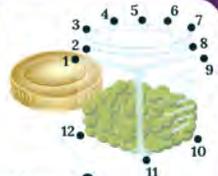
FoodPrint.

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UNIT 7: UNLOCKED!



You're in for the long haul because you know how to...



FoodPrint.

FoodPrint.

Instructions: Cut these unit merit badges out, finish the dot-to-dot, solve the puzzles!