JOHN MUIR DAY
Study Guide

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

John Muir, 1838-1914

John Muir Day
April 21

Sierra Club California and California Department of Education
A Note to the Teacher

“The Governor annually shall proclaim April 21st to be ‘John Muir Day.’ ”
California Government Code Section 6714

“. . . All public schools and educational institutions are encouraged to observe . . .
April 21 of each year as John Muir Day . . . and to conduct suitable commemorative exercises . . . stressing the importance that an ecologically sound natural environment plays in the quality of life for all of us, and emphasizing John Muir’s significant contributions to the fostering of that awareness and the indelible mark he left on the State of California.”
California Education Code Section 37222 (a)(2) and (b)(2).

Celebrating a Lifetime of Conservation

The John Muir Day Study Guide was prepared to help teachers commemorate John Muir Day each April 21 with their classes, implementing Education Code Section 37222. In addition, the guide is produced with the idea that it may be used throughout the school year, integrated with a variety of curriculum topics, to set a tone of caring about our environment. The goals of John Muir Day and this study guide are:

- **Raise awareness** of John Muir as “conservation’s exemplar,” a person whose values and actions virtually led to the modern environmental movement, and whose vision is still being followed today.

- **Increase understanding** through examples of Muir’s scientific endeavors and observations. His experiences contain an element of adventure as well as careful scientific observations, encouraging students to learn about their biophysical environment and to understand the impact we make upon it.

- **Take action** through illustrating Muir’s life and achievements, and helping students to make decisions and solve current environmental challenges in their community, state, nation, and world.

Please listen to your students for their views and interests to guide you, as well. Use the ideas for younger students for the older grades, if they have not been exposed to John Muir before.

Learning about John Muir’s life can serve as a launching pad to environmental studies through earthquakes, glaciers, trees, fossils, geology, resource management, biodiversity, air quality, urban and regional planning, and even astronomy, as we “hitch” up to everything in the universe!

Above all, we encourage you to personalize this unit and make it yours. We have incorporated extension ideas in each lesson plan, so feel free to explore John Muir’s life and legacy further when your students ask, “When are we going to learn more about John Muir?”
Schoolwide Activities

Sponsor a **John Muir Day Celebration** at your school, public library, park, or community center. Invite a speaker, plant and care for trees, put on a skit portraying John Muir, or show a conservation video. Invite a local actor or teacher to portray John Muir.

Combine the recognition of John Muir with **Earth Day** activities for the week before or after Earth Day (April 22). Wear a different color each day to represent elements of the earth, and make friendship bracelets with different colored beads: yellow/sun, blue/water, clear/air, brown/earth, green/plants, and black as a reminder not to pollute.

Display a copy of the Governor’s John Muir Day Proclamation. Write to Governor’s Office, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. Ask your county board of supervisors and city council or mayor to issue a John Muir Day Proclamation, written by your students. For sample forms, contact Sierra Club California (see Evaluation, page 32).

Sponsor a **poster contest** or display artwork that depicts John Muir on one of his adventures, such as crossing a glacier with the dog, Stickeen, climbing Mount Ritter, or climbing a tree during a wind-storm. Display original nature-related artwork by students. Exhibit students’, teachers’, and community members’ work at school or at the library, shopping center, museum, or park for John Muir Day and Earth Day or History Day events.

---

**Biographical Timeline of John Muir’s Life**

1838  Born April 21 in Dunbar, Scotland.
1849  Emigrates to Wisconsin.
1860  Exhibits inventions at Wisconsin State Agriculture Fair.
1861  Enters the University of Wisconsin.
1863  Leaves University of Wisconsin.
1867  Temporarily blinded by eye injury. Once his sight is restored, decides to commit his life to nature study. Sets out on a 1,000-mile walk from Kentucky to the Gulf of Mexico.
1868  Travels to California. Visits Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada, “the most divinely beautiful of all the mountain chains I have ever seen.”
1871  Undertakes intensive study of glaciation in the Sierra. Ralph Waldo Emerson visits him in Yosemite.
1874  Begins series of articles entitled “Studies in the Sierra,” which launch his successful writing career.
1879  First of many visits to Alaska.
1880  Marries Louie Wanda Strentzel, April 14; moves to Martinez, California, to help manage family orchard business.
1890  Succeeds in campaign to create Yosemite National Park.
1892  Helps found Sierra Club to “do something for wilderness and make the mountains glad.” President until his death in 1914.
1903  Tours Yosemite with President Roosevelt.
1904  Completes trip around the world.
1911  Travels to South America and Africa.
1913  Loses campaign to save Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite.
1914  Dies December 24, in Los Angeles.

*Source: Sierra Club*
# Unifying Concept

John Muir, explorer, scientist, and author, studied ecosystems worldwide and expressed his views, helping establish the modern conservation movement.

## Conceptual Matrix and Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Grade Level Section Title</th>
<th>Description of Lessons</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K - 1</td>
<td>John Muir: Long Ago and Now</td>
<td>◊ Sort Natural Objects ◊ Listen to Stories ◊ Make a Booklet about John Muir</td>
<td>Teacher Guide: 4 Student: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3</td>
<td>John Muir in California</td>
<td>◊ Read About Events in John Muir’s Life ◊ Plot Locations Important to John Muir on California Maps</td>
<td>Teacher Guide: 9 Student: 10–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Muir: Around the World in 76 Years</td>
<td>◊ Play the “John Muir Day Game” ◊ Create a Timeline ◊ Plot Locations Important to John Muir on a World Map</td>
<td>Teacher Guide: 16 Student: 17–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>John Muir in Yosemite</td>
<td>◊ Identify Different Perspectives on Valuing the Environment ◊ Participate in a Simulated Historical Debate</td>
<td>Teacher Guide: 20 Student: 21–23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources 30–31
Acknowledgments 32
Evaluation 32
Acknowledgments

Edited and Illustrated by:
Betsy Keithcart

Designed and Written by:
Harold Wood
Coordinator, Sierra Club California
John Muir Education Project

Betsy Keithcart
Science Resource Teacher, Elk Grove Unified School District

Pete Devine
Education Director, Yosemite Institute

Janie Chodosh
Instructor, Yosemite Institute

Frank Helling
Teacher, Chawanakee School District

Additional Contributions by:
Bill Andrews
Consultant, California Department of Education

Erik Beever
Project Assistant, California Department of Education

Dr. Ronald Limbaugh
Professor of History, University of the Pacific

Vanessa Olson
Third Grade Student, Elk Grove Unified School District

Anna Williams
Teacher, Standard School District

Copy Edited by:
Marian Eby
Editorial Consultant, Tulare County Office of Education

Desktop Publishing by:
Susi Gleffe
Information Officer, Tulare County Office of Education

Funded by:
The Environmental Education Grant Program
California Department of Education
Science and Environmental Education Unit

Project Concept and Implementation:
Sierra Club California

Educational and Technical Advisors:
Yosemite Institute
John Muir Center for Regional Studies,
University of the Pacific
John Muir National Historic Site

Evaluation

What do you think about the John Muir Day Study Guide? Please send your written comments to: Sierra Club, Attn: John Muir Day Study Guide, P.O. Box 3543, Visalia, CA 93278 or e-mail your responses to: harold.wood@sierraclub.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Are the grade level topics:</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>2. Are the student materials:</th>
<th>Easy to Understand and Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the teacher information:</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>4. Are the resources:</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grading 1 to 5 (5 being the highest) how would you rate the John Muir Study Guide?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What worked successfully for you and your students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What recommendations would you make for a revision?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>