

# ELA Superheroes: Snapshots of Environmental Literacy in California Classrooms



CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
LITERACY  
INITIATIVE

## Grade 7 Snapshot: *An Environmental Call to Action on Fast Fashion - Building Effective Expression Skills Through Middle School Dialogue About Fast Fashion*

Ms. Arayasirikul’s interdisciplinary argumentative ELA unit asks her students to grapple with who is responsible for corporate environmental degradation, specifically in the “fast fashion” shoes and jeans industries. Ms. Arayasirikul alternates between focusing on shoes or jeans based on the interest of each individual class, which optimizes relevance, value, and authenticity ([UDL Checkpoint 7.2](#)). Students have the opportunity to engage with a variety of differentiated informative texts and use those texts to formulate verbal and written arguments about a high-interest topic. At the end of the unit, students create a social media reel ecological call-to-action using Canva, an online graphic design tool.

When designing curriculum, Ms. Arayasirikul thinks deeply about harnessing her students’ identities, interests, and lived experiences as an entrypoint to deep literacy instruction ([UDL Checkpoint 7.2](#)). Students are first introduced to the idea of a “call to action” through music, and the second part of the hook asks students to look at their own sneakers and jeans and identify and map their origins. They gain background knowledge by analyzing a variety of texts on fast fashion, including TedX talks, infographics, and news articles. Students metacognitively annotate the texts according to roadblocks, connections, and wonderings, which supports them in meaning making ([UDL Checkpoint 3.1](#)). Students are also provided scaffolded notes for each of the texts. After students unpack each text, they share their roadblocks, connections, and wonderings with each other in the form of a gallery walk.

In order to help her students continue to develop effective expression skills, Ms. Arayasirikul strategically pairs students for structured conversations about who is responsible for the environmental impacts of fast fashion: the government, corporations, or consumers themselves? This gives students a low-stakes opportunity to practice their verbal argument skills before engaging in a whole-group discussion ([UDL Checkpoint 8.3](#)). Following the paired conversations, she facilitates a whole-group discussion that allows students to hear their community’s thoughts and share their own informed opinions based on the texts they’ve read. Students are required to specifically create claims, cite text-based evidence, and to recognize and respond to counterclaims.

As a culminating synthesis activity, students create a social media public service reel using Canva in which they state their claim about who is responsible for the environmental degradation caused by the fast fashion industries while citing evidence from Ms. Arayasirikul’s text set ([UDL Checkpoint 5.1](#)). Students also have the option to share their

# ELA Superheroes: Snapshots of Environmental Literacy in California Classrooms



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

reels on their own personal platforms. Ms. Arayasirikul includes opportunities for self-assessment at various points in the unit ([UDL Checkpoint 9.3](#)).

Ms. Arayasirikul’s students are given multiple opportunities and options for weighing in on an environmental justice issue personally connected to their lives, and their excitement about having their voices heard ultimately leads to a deep engagement with argumentative reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Her goal is to not only get students excited about contributing to a conversation about environmental justice and fast fashion, but to give them many different pathways to have their voices heard, regardless of language ability, all while building critical literacy skills.

Framework Highlights	Lesson Details
<p><b><a href="#">UDL Checkpoint 9.3</a>: Develop Self-Assessment and Reflection</b></p>	<p>The unit includes a variety of opportunities for students to self-assess, including a self-assessment form where students assess their discussion skills and what they’ve learned about themselves from the fishbowl discussion.</p>
<p><b><a href="#">EP&amp;C Principle 2B</a>: People Influence Natural Systems</b> Methods used to extract, harvest, transport, and consume natural resources influence the geographic extent, composition, biological diversity, and viability of natural systems.</p>	<p>Students investigate the complex nature of clothing, specifically the environmental effects of sneaker manufacturing, synthetic materials used in these shoes, unfair labor practices, and harmful chemicals used to produce them. Students analyze how changes in the production practices of jeans over time have worsened their environmental impact. Finally, students analyze how cotton T-shirts are made and the environmental and health effects of this entire process.</p>

**CA CSS for ELA/Literacy:**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.A** Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.B** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade

# ELA Superheroes: Snapshots of Environmental Literacy in California Classrooms



CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
LITERACY  
INITIATIVE

7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## Related CA Next Generation Science Standards:

- **MS-ESS3-4.** Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.

## Environmental Principles & Concepts

- **Principle 2A.** Direct and indirect changes to natural systems due to the growth of human populations and their consumption rates influence the geographic extent, composition, biological diversity, and viability of natural systems.
- **Principle 2B.** Methods used to extract, harvest, transport, and consume natural resources influence the geographic extent, composition, biological diversity, and viability of natural systems.

## Additional Information

Article: ["Elevating Environmental Literacy and Environmental Justice through Collaboration"](#) (by Gurbir Kahlon and Marivell Caba Arayasirikul, 2023)