

Acting **On** Climate

Teacher Resource Pack

EXPLORING OUR CONNECTION TO LAND



WELCOME

Our resources are aimed at teachers and practitioners who want to explore the climate emergency with young people in creative ways. They have been designed by education researchers and artist practitioners to help and inspire you to try some of our approaches and activities with the young people you work with. You can pick activities you think would be best suited to your group, we have indicated principal activities with a star ★ on their title, these are a great starting point and useful to complete if you have limited time.

We have aligned our topics with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). According to UNESCO:

"Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), is a key element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is considered a driver for the achievement of all 17 SDGs. ESD empowers everyone to make informed decisions in favour of environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations. It aims to provide the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to address sustainable development challenges."

UNESCO (2018)

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are:



UNESCO GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (2018)

As educators rise to the challenge of integrating ESD learning into the curriculum we hope that these resources will support this integration within an arts-led learning environment.



OUR PEDAGOGIC PRINCIPLES

When working we have established and follow some principles which underpin our work:

PRINCIPLE 1: BE READY TO LISTEN AND ADAPT...

Firstly, we always approach a new group ready to meet them where they are at. We mean this both in terms of drama and devising experience and their understanding of climate change and ecology. The groups of young people we worked with told us they had bigger things to worry about than climate change – such as friendships, exam pressures and the cost of living crisis. It was important that we made space to discuss these rather than immediately impose our own agenda upon them.

PRINCIPLE 2: RESIST STARTING WITH FACTS AND FIGURES...

Secondly, though it is tempting to start with the facts and the figures of climate change we resist this as we do not want to unnecessarily cause eco-anxiety. Furthermore, sometimes facts and figures can feel dry and off-putting, so it is important that we place emphasis on their voices, their stories and what matters to them.

PRINCIPLE 3: EXPLORE AND RESPOND IMAGINATIVELY AND CREATIVELY TO ALREADY EXISTING GREEN SPACES...

Finally, wherever possible we commit to exploring outdoor spaces, making work informed or inspired by these places. Connecting young people to nature is a positive way of developing their sense of curiosity about global environments and starting conversations about climate change. We try and weave this pedagogic practice into as many aspects of our work as possible. Alongside creative writing tasks, we invite young people to respond imaginatively and creatively to green spaces. For example, one group reshaped their short devised scenes to suit their local environment and we reflected on how these spaces affected the intention of their scenes.

EXPLORING OUR CONNECTION TO LAND

One of the starting points for this project was our involvement in a global, multi-sited ethnographic study led by Professor Kathleen Gallagher (University of Toronto) entitled 'Global Youth (Digital) Citizen-Artists and their Publics: Performing for Socio-Ecological Justice' (SSHRC). Through this project we were introduced to and used some of the activities designed by Andrew Kushnir a renowned playwright and theatre maker which we will describe below. These activities led us to further explore the land young people are connected to (both locally and globally) and use these connections as an anchor for conversations about the climate emergency and as a stimulus for devising.

As with any devising project, it is impossible to completely unravel all the threads that have been woven together to create the final piece. We used several different activities and student-led research to explore our connection to Land. We have explained each of these in more detail below, which you can use within your own session planning.

RESOURCES:

Paper
Pens

ROOM SET-UP

School hall or studio

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ALIGNMENT



ACTIVITY ONE: MAPPING GAME

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

This activity is used to get students thinking about their connection to land (both locally and globally) and how our place (for us this was Coventry) connects to other places around the UK and the world.

HOW TO PLAY

DO: This game works by using the space to map various locations of the world. We start locally by mapping the city/town where we are working with the young people.

DO: Get the young people to imagine the space as their city

- *Where are some of the landmarks?*
- *Where is your neighbourhood? Or somewhere you go to regularly?*
- *Where in your neighbourhood or city do you feel most happy or have happy memories?*
- *What places outside do you walk by every day without really noticing?*
- *What places do you enjoy outside? Playing football? Meeting with friends? Sharing food?*

DO: Once you have established the landscape see if you can work together to develop a soundscape / moving image of the city.

- *What does this landscape sound like?*
- *What does it move like?*
- *What does this land mean to you?*
- *What do those places say or sing?*

DO: Now map the UK

DO: Establish where in the space is the North of the UK, the South etc.

ASK: Stand where they are from – this may be the town you are working in but others may have moved before settling in the town or have connections to other cities or countries within the UK.

ASK: Young people to reach their arm to somewhere in the UK they would like to go or have family/friends/ another connection. Get them to say this aloud.

DO: Now map the World – same idea. What connections do you have with different places? What places are you connected to? Where would you like to go?



Talking Points and Insights

We wanted to begin to think about how **each person in the room has a connection to other lands beyond the city we were working in.** This enabled us to ask a key question - *Why might we think about our global connections when thinking about a topic such as the climate crisis?* And moved us onto the below activity.

ACTIVITY TWO: LAND IMAGES

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?



This activity is used to get students thinking about their connection to land (both locally and globally).

HOW TO PLAY



DO: Set the young people the task of bringing in a photo of land that “means something to them”. This may be land that is local – a place they visit often, a place they pass each day, or it may be a global connection, a land which connects them to their heritage, a land where they grew up, or their family is from. There is no right or wrong for what the students pick.

EXPLAIN: That when you next meet, the young people must be prepared to describe their land, give a tour of their land and explain why they chose it, and why is it important to them. What message does it tell them?

ASK: In the next session get the students to share their land images. You may like to take some time to arrange these around the space and get each of the students to look at the land stories. We found there was a huge diversity in what images were chosen, some were of football stadiums, gardens or trees near their home in the UK, and others were lands further away where young people had a connection.

ASK: young people to then collect their picture and spend the next few minutes free writing about their land with the stimulus of “Imagine you are in that place and write down your story – why is that land important to you, what message does it tell you?”

DO: Once this is complete, get students to work in pairs or small groups and share their stories. Can they identify common themes, are there key phrases, emotions, and landscapes within their stories?

Talking Points and Insights

The above activity was used as a stimulus for making our Land Stories performance. We used verbatim methods to make scripts of the young people's land stories and tasked them to work in small groups to devise short scenes based on the verbatim scripts.

Beyond a tool for creating performance, we found that exploring young people's connection to land could open up conversations related to the climate crisis.

Are these lands impacted by the climate crisis? What will these lands look like in five, ten twenty years? Will they have changed? Will they exist?

Discovering young people's emotional connection to land also helped them engage with some of the wider conversations we were having about the climate crisis and begin to think of the consequences each of us will face as a result of it.

You may also like to combine this activity with the Mapping Game and map young people's land stories in place and develop soundscapes or moving images of these places.

ACTIVITY THREE: GET OUTSIDE

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?



We found that often the land outside of the indoor studio space we were working in often went unnoticed by the young people, and many had few experiences of being or learning in nature. Through our process we wanted to build upon young people's connection to outdoor environments and how this is impacted by the climate crisis.

HOW TO PLAY



DO: Give young people the opportunity to explore the closest 'nature' to the space you are working in and set them on the following tasks:

Treasure hunt/geocaching:

ASK: Young people to find:

- The smallest thing,
- The most intriguing thing,
- The most beautiful thing,
- The strangest/oddest thing



Free writing for 90 seconds for each prompt:

- Find a fully grown plant and imagine its story. What was it like as a seed? What has it been like to grow in this garden? Tell its story as if you are that plant.
- Imagine you are a ladybird/bee/butterfly. When you fly around, what can you see?
- Imagine you are a hedgehog in the garden. What do you smell at night?
- Imagine a conversation between two plants/flowers in the garden. What would they say?

Nature scavenger hunt:

Find a:

Spider's web
Ladybird
Worm
Herbs
Lichen
Feather



Talking Points and Insights

We were fortunate that the schools we worked in had outside spaces and gardens that were easily accessible to the young people. *You may not have such space but still try to take young people outside and consider the nature around them. Indeed, this may prompt a discussion amongst the young people about access to outdoor spaces - where do they get to play? Why are outdoor spaces connected to wellbeing. We found that the young people's of the 'lockdown' during the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many had a newfound appreciation for walking around their local green spaces.*