

Acting **On** Climate

Teacher Resource Pack

EXPLORING POWER & AGENCY



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 POWER AND AGENCY



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 power and agency. We have explained each of these in more detail below, which you can use within your own session planning.

RESOURCES:

Chairs
Globe prop
Character profiles
Paper
Pens

ROOM SET-UP

School hall or studio

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ALIGNMENT



ACTIVITY ONE: SPECTRUM OF DIFFERENCE

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?



Throughout our process we wanted to begin by meeting the young people we were working with “where they were at” in relation to the topic of the climate crisis. By adopting this approach we needed to ascertain what their current thoughts and views were before beginning to work with them. This activity was one of the best ways we could begin conversations, giving each young person the opportunity to tell and show us their views on the topic and also measure the general consensus in the room before moving forward.



HOW TO PLAY

EXPLAIN: you are going to pose a series of statements. Participants should stand towards one end of the room if they strongly agree with the statement (10 on the spectrum), and the other end if they strongly disagree (1 on the spectrum). The middle of the room will act as a sliding scale, participants should stand near the middle if they neither agree nor disagree (5 on the spectrum) and can stand anywhere they feel represents their views (i.e 3 or 7).

DO: Read out each statement and let students move to where they feel they are on the spectrum.

ASK: Once the young people have situated themselves in the room, ask them to discuss with the people closest to them why they are there.

ASK: Once these conversations have happened, ask young people at extreme ends of the spectrum why they stood there, and what were they discussing, and then ask a range of students from the middle.

DO: Depending on your project you may like to form your own statements to read aloud. We have included ours to guide you. These questions related to power/voice/listening and climate crisis locally/nationally/globally.

- *I think about the climate emergency very often*
- *The climate emergency affects me personally*
- *I've got bigger things to worry about than the climate emergency.*
- *I try to live sustainably – it is easy for me*
- *I feel listened to by society*
- *I feel I have the power to solve issues my community face*
- *It is down to my generation to fix the climate emergency*
- *The arts are a useful platform to discuss the climate crisis*



Talking Points and Insights

The idea here is that **this structures a conversation where we respect different opinions** and views of others, and also value others and our own opinions on the topic. **It gave us an insight into where the young people were at with their thinking**, and allowed us to springboard into other activities surrounding the climate crisis and *more broadly power and voice within our communities.*

ACTIVITY TWO: SHOW ME

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

The activity was included in our process to delve deeper into discovering the young people's thoughts and attitudes about Power within society, it also provided us an opportunity to begin to learn about how they work as a collaborative and how confident they were working creatively using drama skills (Tableaux's) in practice.



HOW TO PLAY

ASK: the participants to walk around the room, finding their own pathway through the space.

EXPLAIN: You are going to ask them to show you some concepts of power by making images with their body. Some may be as individuals and some will be working with others.

DO: Call out each of the statements below (you could also write your own) after each statement get one half of the room to freeze in their position and the other half to walk around the tableaux and think about what they are seeing. What images can they see? What stories are unfolding in space? Then get the participants to swap over so the others can experience both.

ASK: Walk around the space and you need to show me:

- Power – as 1 person
- Power – as a whole group
- Powerless – as 1
- Influence – as 4 people
- Voiceless – as a whole group
- Power and powerless – contrast
- Citizenship – as pairs

You may like to take this opportunity to also introduce free writing.

DO: Get individuals to sit in their own space with some paper and a pen.

EXPLAIN: They will be given six statements. After each statement, they will have 1-2 minutes to free-write what comes to mind. They must keep their pen moving on the paper, there is no right or wrong within this activity and you are not worried about handwriting, grammar or spelling, but only about what comes into their mind.

DO: Read the following statements (*or write your own*):

- Full and Less
- I am power...
- We are power...
- They are power...
- Together we are...
- I feel heard...



Talking Points and Insights

Both of these activities enabled us to **have meaningful conversations about power distribution in our society** and where the young people position themselves within the power dynamics at play. They created outputs from these activities that could be used as a **stimulus for further creative devising work.**

ACTIVITY THREE: PRISONER AND GUARD

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

This game is usually a warm-up drama game, but we used it as a springboard for provoking a conversation about how power is shared within the climate crisis.

HOW TO PLAY



DO: split the group of participants into one-third and two-thirds (for example, if you have 15 participants, you need a group of 5 and a group of 10).

ASK: each participant in the larger group to take a chair, make a large circle, and stand behind their chair.

ASK: each person in the smaller group to sit in one of the chairs in the circle. Some chairs will remain empty.

EXPLAIN: in this game, the people standing behind a chair always want someone to be sat in the chair in front of them. They can signal for someone sitting down to move from their chair and into their empty chair by nodding or winking at them. This means that if they have someone sitting in the chair in front of them, others will try to steal them! They can stop the person in the chair in front of them from moving by tapping them on the arm (below the shoulder, above the elbow). Those who are sitting on the chairs must move if someone signals for them to do so. Those standing behind a chair should keep their arms by their side (unless tapping someone to stop them moving) and cannot chase after someone....they are glued to the spot.

DO: As you play the game, encourage people to try out different tactics to succeed.

DO: After a while, you can ask those with someone in the chair in front of them to swap, so that participants have a chance to experience different roles in the game.

Talking Points and Insights

After playing for a while, stop the game. Have a discussion using the following prompts to help you link the game to issues of power and inequality:

- *What did you notice happening in this game? (Encourage them to talk about what was interesting, what tactics worked, and what was funny?)*
- *How did it feel playing the game? What was fun? What was frustrating?*
- *Who has power in this game, and why?*
- *If we were to think about wider society, who are these different people? How do they wield power?*
- *Talk to the person next to you – how could the conversation we have been having relate to the climate crisis?*
- *If these people have the power, then who do they represent in this issue? Who do the other people, lacking power, represent?*
- **Discuss:** what gives us power in relation to climate emergency or, more broadly, what gives us the power to make the changes we want to happen?

ACTIVITY FOUR: CHARACTER PROFILES

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

This game is usually a warm-up drama game, but we used it as a springboard for provoking a conversation about how power is shared within the climate crisis.

HOW TO PLAY

DO: Hand out roles (*they will double or triple up to help with discussion*):

- 14-year-old student in the UK
- 18-year-old farmer in Kenya
- An oil rig worker
- An investment banker in London
- Single parent with 2 children under 10 years old in Coventry
- A teacher in a busy school in Birmingham
- A politician trying to keep their seat in an upcoming election
- Refugee who has left Bangladesh due to constant flooding

DO: Get young people to line up across the space.

EXPLAIN: They should step forward if they feel they have power in response to the following sentences:

DO: Read out the following sentences:

- *I feel confident to share my views and ideas*
- *I am listened to by others in society*
- *I can make a choice to buy ethical products*
- *I can engage in activism to tackle the climate crisis*
- *I understand why the climate crisis is happening, and how to stop it*

ASK: Students to raise their hand on a scale (high if lots of impact, low if none) if your actions directly impact on the climate.

DO: Elicit the reasons from the young people as to why they stepped forward or raised their hands.

ASK: Young people to stand in a circle, they are still their character.

DO: place a globe in the centre of a circle,

ASK: participants to step into the image, you may like to do this group by group, individually or as a collective.

ASK: that as they step into the circle they should demonstrate how the different roles might FEEL about power/powerlessness in relation to climate change. How can they use their bodies to demonstrate this? How they use spatial proxemics to show this relationship.

DO: Explore the different images around the space.



Talking Points and Insights

We did not have time to but ideally, **you would set this as a research task and build a character profile for each of the roles above.** Alternatively, you could *write character profiles for each of the roles above* and distribute these amongst the group before beginning this activity.

ACTIVITY FIVE: GRANDMOTHERS FOOTSTEPS

WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

To help us create pieces of movement, we used the simple children's game Grandmother's Footsteps...*with a twist!*

HOW TO PLAY



ASK: one participant to stand at one end of the room and face the wall. You can give them an object, like a bottle or – as we did – a globe (as we wanted to represent the world). The rest of the group should all stand at the opposite side of the room.

EXPLAIN: Their goal is to try and take the object. However, they can only move when the person guarding the object has their back turned. This person can turn and try and catch participants moving. If they manage to see someone moving, they are sent back to the start. This means they must freeze still any time 'grandmother' turns around.

DO: You can add different variations into this game to help build up collaboration skills in the group, and to also see different qualities of movement happening:

ASK: the group to now need to work together. To win, they must transport the object back to the start without being caught. To make it extra challenging, you could add the rule that if anyone is caught moving, the whole group start again.

Talking Points and Insights

Using the structure of grandma's footsteps, how can we create a scene that demonstrates power/powerlessness?

Could we incorporate the ideas discovered through the characters we introduced earlier?

In our project, after playing this game we asked the young people to think about a '**spectrum of power and responsibility**' explored in the character profiles activity. At one end of the room, we asked them to think about people who might not have much power over, or responsibility for, the crisis. At the other end of the room, we asked them to think about those with lots of power. Their task was to create pieces of movement that showed how these different individuals and communities felt about the issue.

The group thought about how many are having to flee their homes and countries due to environmental catastrophes, the impact on small-scale farmers, the difficult decisions a single parent might face when it comes to buying organic or more sustainable goods, as well as the money and vested interests that a few very powerful groups or people have to not change anything regarding this issue.