



Total time

30 minutes

Age range

8-14 years



Thought starters:

Activities to prepare students for writing their messages



These resources have been created in collaboration with Letters to the Earth:
<https://www.letterstotheearth.com/>

The following activities act as a stimulus for writing a message and are designed to provoke a creative response in young people. They invite young people to connect with their feelings about the Earth and the climate and ecological crisis, and to consider how we can make change. These resources are for teachers, parents/care-givers and young people to use both in the classroom and at home. You can complete as many or as few of the preparatory activities as you like before inviting children to write their message at www.changemakerswll.org

1. **Our Connection to Planet Earth** - Cultivate a relationship between children and nature that is based on awe and wonder and forms positive experiences with the natural world.
2. **Exploring Issues Affecting Our Planet Through Stories** - Stories are a great way to introduce the themes of the value of nature and the impact of climate change in a way that engages children's' imaginations.
3. **Processing Emotions about the Planetary Crisis** - Children are invited to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the natural world and the planetary crisis.

Activity 1: Introducing Our Home, Planet Earth

We begin by cultivating a relationship between young people and nature that is based on awe and wonder.

In 1968 humans first went to the moon. What was taken on that trip was the first photo of our planet, Earth. The crew were awe-inspired by seeing our own planet hanging in space.

The photo later became known as "Earthrise" and the image of the world rising in the dark vastness of space over a sun-lit lunar landscape became an iconic reminder of our lonely planet's splendid isolation and delicate fragility.

How does it make you feel to see the Earth from this perspective?

The Earth is the only planet known so far to harbour life. If the life-span of Earth was a 24 hour clock, human beings only arrived on Earth in the last minute of the planet's history - before us there have been dinosaurs, 5 extinctions, and 5 ice ages.

How does that make you feel about us as a species?

How well do you see humans looking after planet Earth and the other species that we share it with?



Activity 2: Nature connection activities

Spending time outdoors and connecting with the natural world builds our relationship to it and helps us understand its importance.

Exercise: Nature Observation

Take yourself for a walk outdoors. Let your eyes follow the movement of nature - leaves blowing in the wind, birds flying above, grass rustling on the ground.

What can you see? What can you hear? What can you feel? What can you smell?

You might discover a favourite tree, or something you'd like to observe more closely and take home to sketch. This could be a feather, shell, stone, twig for example.

Exercise: Give the Earth a Voice

Imagine yourself to be anything you want to that is part of our planet that doesn't normally speak. It could be another species, or a geographical feature like a mountain or the sea. What does the world look like from your perspective? What do you want to say now you have been given a voice?

Activity 3: Mindfulness/ stilling exercises

Thinking about the Earth, the climate and ecological crisis and what we stand to lose may bring up difficult feelings for children. The following exercise provides a space in which children can connect with their feelings and share them in a way that feels comfortable.

Meditation on a leaf

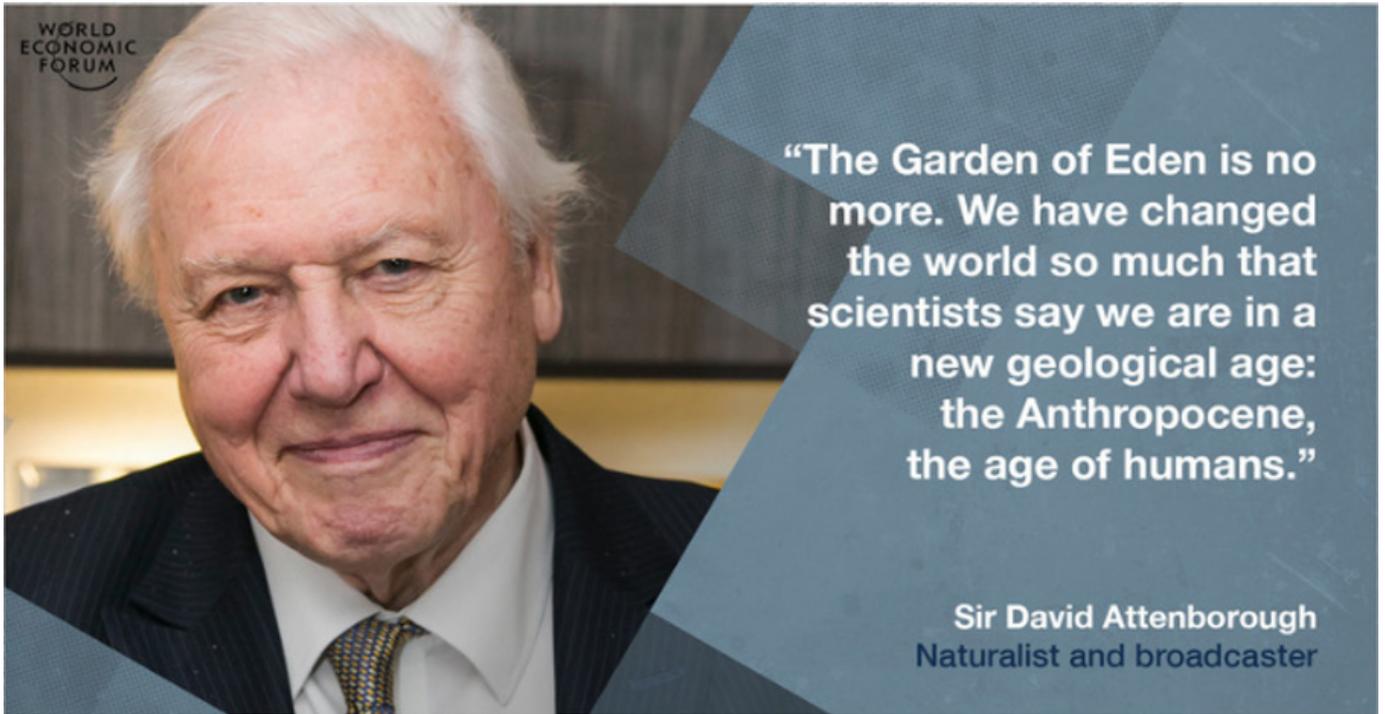
Provide them with an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings at the end of the meditation.

Find a leaf in your garden or street. Sit with the leaf. Place it on the palm of your hand, how does it feel? How heavy is it? What colours can you see in your leaf? Stroke the veins of the leaf. What does it make you think of? Where do you think this leaf has been? Was it once high up on a tree? What might it have seen passing below? Imagine you are the leaf for a moment. Let your thoughts come and go like people passing below a tree.

Imagine you are having a conversation with your leaf. What would you like to ask? What might this leaf want to tell you? How would it feel to be a leaf in the rain? What about on a sunny day?

Activity 4: How Humans have Changed Planet Earth

The below allows young people to explore their understanding of climate change and the Sixth Mass Extinction



Discuss:

How have humans changed the world? What does the 'Age of Humans' look like and feel like?

The Ecological Crisis

We are not alone: we are part of a rich collection of living things on the Earth. We depend on a healthy natural environment for our air, food and quality of life.

But as well as getting hotter, the planet is also experiencing what scientists call 'The 6th Mass Extinction'.

Around 25% of species are threatened with extinction, and humans are destroying natural habitat which puts more species at risk: Humans have affected 75% of land, 66% of the oceans, and 75% of fresh water leaving little room for anything else.

In what other ways is human activity destroying the planet and its species?



Activity 5: Processing Emotions about the Planetary Crisis

It's important to connect with our emotions when confronted with these facts.

Common feelings associated with learning about the climate and ecological crisis include: anger, numbness, denial, shock, sadness, grief, despair.

All of these feelings are normal. Each of our emotions is telling us something, so it is important for us to listen to these emotions and not ignore them.

Take a moment to investigate what your emotions might be trying to tell you.

What emotions are you feeling right now?

Have a go at expressing these feelings in words. What do you want to say?

Activity 6: Action

Your voice matters!

Now is the time for innovation, creativity and possibility.
There are many taking action around the world and you can too!

What will you speak up for?

What's your message for change?

Who will you write to?

To find out more about
Letters to the Earth check out:

www.letterstotheearth.com

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