



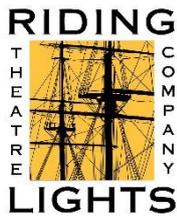
# Baked Alaska

Resources for school RE for students aged 13-18 about climate change inspired by the Riding Lights Theatre Company show which asks...

## Can we save the planet?

This is one of seven files of teaching and learning ideas, useful in RE and RME, where issues about ethics, theology and climate change are explored with young people. Each file of lesson ideas is accompanied by a PowerPoint sequence for teachers to use as they introduce the complex ethics of climate change to their students.

The work draws upon ideas from Christianity and other religions and worldviews but the key focus is on human and humane values. Each of the seven units relates to a film clip from the stage show.



### Unit 3: Getting Personal

#### Whose problem? Whose fault?

In this unit, the film explores the question of responsibility for global pollution. Western lifestyles consume, waste and pollute more than lifestyles in the developing world, but the worst effects are borne by the developing countries.

### British Values

Schools promote the values of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law. This work contributes to exploring these values by raising challenging questions about what 'the common good' means. Should rich individuals have freedom to exploit and spoil the world? Does a vision of global democracy invite a different kind of behaviour?

### Curriculum connections

The learning objectives in this work connect to GCSE, Scottish RME and RE outcomes for 14-year-olds, including enabling learners to:

- Explain connections between religion and belief and environmental ethics;
- Give reasons for their views about climate change and its impacts on humanity;
- Consider arguments for climate justice;
- Develop their analysis of the challenges faced by this generation on Earth about the future of the planet.

#### GCSE RS requires the study of:

- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources and pollution.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.

#### In Scotland, this work connects to the intention that the RME Curriculum enables students to:

- Apply developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society. [RME 4-02b]

### Summary of the film

#### Getting Personal (approximate length 9:10)

The film explores the issue of responsibility for waste, pollution and the spoiling of the Earth.

Adam has two arguments, one with his wife about their new kitchen, considering whether they have any responsibility for the deforestation that is caused by 'Western' wood use, then another with his next door neighbour Fenella, who is emptying her bins into his garden and will not take any responsibility for clearing up.

The narrative moves on: Adam's therapist explains that the 'rubbish in the garden' scenario that has angered him so much is part of his therapy, to enable him to see the world as it really is and to take his share of responsibility. Reality dawns on him slowly.

Adam admits the facts of the situation, and is challenged: will you do anything about it at all?

### Learning Activity 1: The New Year of the Trees

Watch clip 3 with the class. Read and consider the work on page 3 below about the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, the New Year of the Trees.

#### Discuss these questions:

- In what ways do the messages of the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, the 'New Year of the Trees' connect to the drama of Adam's arguments about rubbish, waste and responsibility?
- Recycling our rubbish has become normal in the last 20 years in the UK, but we are still polluters of the Earth on a big scale, not least burners of carbon fuel, which leads to the dangers of global warming. This is a kind of 'hidden pollution'. But potentially deadly.
- Ask students in pairs to produce written answers to the 6 questions on page three below, and compare their answers with another pair, adding further ideas and insights through discussion.

### Learning Activity 2: Turning the World Upside Down

- Enlarge the picture on page 4 below and run the team visual learning activity called 'Picture from Memory' Each member of a team of 4 has a turn for a ten-second look at the picture, and then draws like fury to recreate it on a piece of poster paper in their group. Twice through the teams takes about 12-15 minutes and is very memorable. Then discuss: what are the meanings of the picture? Ask students to consider these possible meanings:
  - 'The division between rich and poor is killing the planet, and needs to be reversed.'
  - 'The Spirit of God turns the world upside down for justice.'
  - 'Our biggest problems come from seeing things as they are, not as they could be.'
- Teach students about Pentecost and Christian belief about the Holy Spirit, as RS / RME syllabuses require: at this festival, Christians celebrate God the Holy Spirit, who 'hovers over the Earth' (Genesis) and who enabled Jesus' disciples to 'turn the world upside down' (Acts of the Apostles). If you believe God's Spirit is found in all that lives, how should you behave?
- Around their drawing of the 'Inky Mitch' picture, ask each group of students to write 6-8 questions the image raises. Who / what / where / when / how / why / what if...
- Pass the drawing and questions to another group: can they attempt some answers?
- Page 8, below, gives further information about the picture, and the reasons for Christian Aid's involvement in climate change, linked to key concepts in the examination criteria for religious studies / RME. Give this information to students: does it help to answer their questions?

### Learning Activity 3: Analysing a concept: opposite and similar, 14 words

- Ask pairs of students to take a copy of the grid on page 5 below, and one concept to write in Box 1 from this list: **CREATION / LOVING THE EARTH / POLLUTION / RESPONSIBILITY / CARING FOR THE PLANET**. In the other 14 boxes, filled in the right number order, they must write one word (or very short phrase) that is either the opposite of, or similar to, the preceding box.
- This activity draws out onto paper the concepts we hold in our minds but rarely articulate. When each pair has their grid, ask them to join up with two other pairs and compare notes. What did they learn? The concepts on the page usually show lots of interesting ways we think about a big idea!

### Learning Activity 4:

- With the class, plan a creative response to students' learning about climate justice. Two examples are featured on page 6 below, each using the symbol of leaves on a tree, but other metaphors are available.
- Challenge the class to devise and make a climate justice tree of their own, to publicise the issues they have been learning about. Should it be installed in the school entrance hall? A local sacred building? A supermarket? A bank?
- You might ask them to create one green leaf each, with a pledge on it about how they will join the struggle for climate justice, and one orange or brown leaf that states one thing they will leave behind, or stop doing, for the future of the Earth. They might express their ideas about the religious and spiritual teaching they have been studying.

## A New Year of the Trees: what can we learn from Jewish tradition and belief?

Rosh Hashanah is an annual Jewish New Year celebration. Not the New Year for humans, but the New Year of the Trees. Jewish people celebrate by eating fruit and by widespread planting of trees.

There is a story in the Midrash of a very old man planting a fig tree. When the town boys laughed at him and asked if he really expected to live long enough to eat the figs that grew there, he smiled and said: "I was born into a fruitful world many years ago, a life full of ready pleasures. My forefathers and ancestors planted for me, and now I am planting for my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren to come."

Planting is an act of faith. You could eat that fruit, but you bury it instead, and walk away. Don't dig it up to see if it sprouted: you'll kill it. You can't track its progress for months or years to come. Planters need trust in G-d or Nature or something, and patience, and some determination. So many variables can influence the eventual outcome, and we have so few means of control, that any future yield can truthfully be described as miraculous.

**Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum** is from Victoria, Australia. He explains the 'New Year of the Trees' like this:

"Growth is best accomplished in private. Underground, away from the bright lights and crass demands for instant results, one can develop and mature in a stable and enduring manner.

"What's more, just as a seed must first rot before it can begin to generate new beginnings, a person intent on self-growth and character evolution must be ready to undergo revolutionary change, to the point that the old 'I', the ego and self-awareness, is completely effaced. Only in an atmosphere of humility and acceptance can the new I develop.

"The end results can be truly astounding: allowed to mature and flourish, supplied with Torah-rich nourishment and pruned of the dead-wood, one seed yields returns many hundredfold; the new persona sprouts fertile and proud, a source of nourishment for all and a resource and sustenance for generations to come."



May the blue bird of happiness  
sing in your Pomegranate Tree.  
Wishing you a joyful New Year.  
Shana Tovah!

In this Rosh Hashanah greeting card, the popular symbol of the pomegranate tree stands for the fruitful Earth.

### For conversation and writing:

- What did you find out about Rosh Hashanah?
- From Rabbi Elisha's comments, what do you agree with? Anything you disagree with? Say why.
- Tree planting as a spiritual way of thanking God for the good Earth: what do you think?
- Can everyone learn something from this festival?
- Some people say that climate justice can only be achieved by big political change. Others think the changes we need come in human hearts and minds first, and only then can we change the world. What would the Rabbi say about this? And what do you think?
- "I think the Riding Lights drama about the kitchen, the rubbish and deforestation carries messages similar to the Festival of Rosh Hashanah." What might these similar messages be?



This image, used by permission, is © copyright, Christian Aid, Martin Gage and Inky Mitch. In 2016, Pentecost and Christian Aid Week were happening at the same time in May.

## Opposite and Similar: A 14~word thinking skills structure, for assessing conceptual clarity in RE

Complete the grid, but never use the same word twice. Simple negatives are forbidden as well!

1.		2.		Opp of 1			
3. Sim to 1		4. Opp of 3		5. Sim to 2		6. Opp of 5	
9. Sim to 3	10. Opp of 9	11. Sim to 4	12. Opp of 11	13. Sim to 5	14. Opp of 13	7. Sim to 6	8. Opp of 7

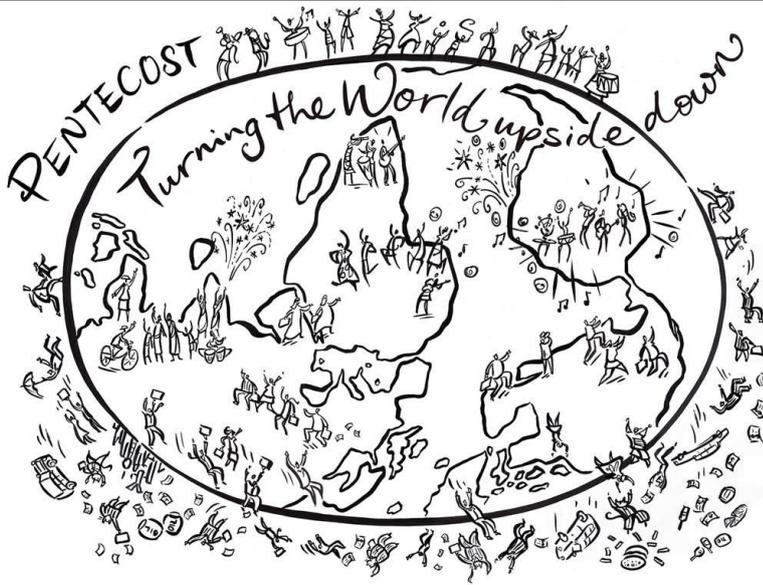
The structure draws out from inside our heads material we hardly notice we know and makes it available for clarifying and comparing. The concepts you have written in boxes 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12 and 13 will all be related in your mind, in some ways opposite to the concepts in boxes 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 14.

**A whole class creative act: what are we going to do about it?** These two examples show off a simple approach to make a creative response to students' learning about climate justice. Show them to your class, and challenge them to make a climate justice tree of their own. You might ask them to create one green leaf each, with a pledge on it about how they will join the struggle for climate justice, and one orange or brown leaf that states one thing they will leave behind, or stop doing, for the future of the Earth. They might express their ideas about religious and spiritual teaching, as Alice (12) has done in her image, by including key quotations from sources of spiritual wisdom on the tree and leaves. Where will they display this shared sculpture, to have a wider impact on people's perceptions of the issues?



For more similar images, see the NATRE 'Spirited Arts' web gallery of pupils' work from our 'Art in Heaven' competitions [www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts](http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts)

## Is Christian Aid's action on climate change the work of the Holy Spirit?



The picture was produced by Christian Aid for Pentecost, 2016. The festival of Pentecost celebrates the birth of the church and the coming of God's Holy Spirit to energise the Christian community and bring in God's kingdom. The earliest Christians, inspired by the Holy Spirit, were said by their enemies to have 'turned the world upside down' with their teaching, radical living and mixture of love and forgiveness. Saint Paul started maybe the first global aid agency, collecting money from all the 20+ churches he had started, to help victims of famine in Jerusalem.

Christian Aid, the major global development agency supported by over 40 different denominations of the Christian church in the UK, has been involved in environmental protection and campaigning work for over 20 years because environmental damage hurts the poor of the Earth the most. Their campaigns for the control of climate change aim to make it easier for poor communities to grow food, become self-sufficient and control their own future.

Look at some examples of Christian Aid projects which are responding to climate change:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDquoGS4hVU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDquoGS4hVU) As well as political campaigning in the UK, Christian Aid support hundreds of projects in different parts of the world where climate change, deforestation, pollution or other aspects of environmental destruction are preventing people from 'living life to the full'.

Nathan Obokoh's fascinating and excellent video accompanying the picture is here:

<https://vimeo.com/166499226> It is an exploration of Acts Chapter 2 and the symbolism of the 'fire of the Spirit'. Watch it with your students: do any of them want to make a climate justice video?

### 4 Concepts in Christian tradition: How do these ideas encourage Christians to be green?

**Stewardship:** A 'steward' looks after the boss's property. Christians see themselves as stewards of God's good Earth. Good Christians should love every tree and flower, every bird or fish because God made them all. God is the boss of the Earth and has asked Christians to be the stewards of the Earth and look after it.

**Jesus: Child of the Earth** If you read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, looking for a 'green Jesus' then it shows that he cared about birds, figs, foxes, lilies, grass, sparrows and much else. Christian belief is that God not only made the Earth, but came to be part of it: God in Jesus comes as a human. This leads some Christians to see Jesus in a 'green' light.

**'The Earth is the Lord's'** Psalm 21 in the Bible says 'The Earth is the Lord's and everything within it. The world and all who live in it.' Patrick Appleford wrote this hymn (watch on YouTube if you wish):

*"O Lord all the world belongs to You  
And You are always making all things new  
What is wrong You forgive  
And the new life You give  
Is what's turning the world upside-down."*

**God as Green Spirit.** The 2000-year history of Christianity includes streams such as the Celtic Christians who are alert to the Spirit of God 'hovering over the Earth' like a dove, loving the Earth. Some strands of Christianity don't bother with this idea, but maybe 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christians, facing our ecological crisis, will recover the idea of 'God as green spirit' more and more.