



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 5: Rising Tide

Bangladesh and Us: Who's responsible? Climate Justice

In this unit, the film explores the fact of climate change in one of its most damaging examples: the Deccan delta, in Bangladesh, is suffering from rising tides and sea levels, making the lives of those who live there unsustainable.

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 questions about how our 'liberty' has an impact on poorer communities, and about respect for all.

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

Rising Tide (approximate length 17:00)

Eve, 'Mrs Average,' like a tourist, is getting ready to go to Bangladesh, described in paradisaical 'holiday brochure' terms. But the film clip explores the impact of cyclones, tidal waves, salination, degradation of farmland and disappearing land as the sea level rises. Mrs Average finds out about the impact of floods on the communities of the Deccan delta from Selina. Hurricane Aila made 1 million Bangladeshi people homeless in one night. After the flood, desperate families were reduced to selling their children into bonded labour in a brick factory to keep loan sharks at bay. Jahanara sold her children, 11 and 13, to a brick making factory. The challenges of climate change seem remote from the UK, but adaptation, survival, food, clean water, land for growing crops are the everyday concerns of the Bangladeshis. Are we too selfish, or not desperate enough to change? A 'too late' song finishes the clip.

Learning Activity 1: Prince Harry Said...

Use page 3 to ask students what they think HRH Prince Harry might contribute to the debate about environmental issues. Get them to speculate what he might say about the fact that the population of African elephants has declined over the last thirty years from over 1 million to under 400,000. Get them to write down less than 135 words which they think he might have said.

Then show the quotation below. It is 135 words.

- Develop insights through a discussion: if climate change has an impact on a very visible species like elephants, we may be very worried, or even angry.
- However, the impact of climate change on human life is perhaps even more devastating. Watch the clip. It is moving.

Learning Activity 2: Responsibility Pies – a thinking skills idea.

- Enlarge the 'pie chart' from page 4, making a copy for each pair of students. Their task is to discuss and analyse who they think is responsible for the tragedy in the drama clip, of parents who sold their 11- and 13-year-old children into 'slave labour' because they were so poor. The chart suggests 6 factors that might explain this tragic act. Students must discuss and allocate a 'slice of pie' to each of the six factors. The question is: Jahanara sold her two children into slave labour in a brick factory. Who is responsible?
- When they have completed the pie – allow 5-10 minutes, and ask them to fill in the segments around the edge with bullet pointed reasons, then pair each couple of students with another pair for comparison and further discussion.
- Watch this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2re5J65P50> It shows the example of Morsheda, a Bangladeshi woman affected by floods, whose home has been saved by a Christian Aid project.
- Christian scripture (Matthew 25, in the GCSE RS syllabuses) says that Jesus welcomed into heaven those who helped him. Surprised, the righteous ask: 'When did we see you in need, hungry, naked, homeless or helpless and help you?' Jesus replies: 'Whenever you did help the least of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did it for me.' Consider: how Christian people in the UK should respond to climate change disasters like the story from Selina in Bangladesh? Christian Aid projects to build houses on stilts or floating hyacinth gardens are one kind of response, but what prayers, actions, giving and lifestyle changes might be an adequate Christian – or merely human – response to the unfolding issues?

Learning Activity 3: Extended writing – the million path essay framework

- Copy page 5 below for each student to use as a way of constructing their writing for GCSE or Standard Grade examination practice.
- Each student should select any ten prompts from at least 5 of the boxes in the framework (there are over a million possible combinations), to explore and express their learning about climate change, religious responses, human tragedy and related issues.

Learning Activity 4: Create a visual meditation or prayer

- Watch this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1QpUmB9zJE> It is a prayer for Christian Aid week 2016, based upon the examples of rising river waters the students have studied.
- Challenge (and enable) students, working in small teams, to express their hopes, prayers or meditations in a similar way to this prayer – they could write a text, select images and film on their phone...

Prince Harry said...

Tell the students that one aspect of our environmental crisis is the human impact, and particularly the impact of climate change, on other species. One example is the decline in the number of elephants living in the wild. Estimates vary, but there may now be under 400,000 African elephants left. Thirty years ago, there were over 1,000,000.

Prince Harry works for an elephant charity, and in a recent press release spoke up for the future of the elephant. Ask students to guess what he said, before you show them this quote. They should make a note. It is 135 words in total.

"I do believe we need a regulatory body so that everyone who owns or manages wildlife is subject to inspection and rated on how well they look after the animals and how the communities benefit.

"I know I'm going to get criticised for this but we have to come together. You know what Stevie Wonder said: 'You need teamwork to make the dream work'. I use that a lot. Elephant parks are very special places but they are islands with a sea of people around them.

"I do worry. I think everyone should worry. We need to look after these animals because otherwise our children will not have a chance to see what we have seen.

This is God's test: If we can't save some animals in a wilderness area, what else can't we do?"



What did Harry mean by saying 'this is God's test'?

(Image: Wiki Commons)

"The idea of 'God's test' is that humans are responsible for the elephants, and if we can't pass this test, of saving these magnificent creatures, then we don't deserve the world and all its beauty. If there is a God, it is not a God who will do miracles to save the elephants from us: we are the stewards of the planet. God wants us to save the elephants."

'Responsibility Pies': An RE Thinking Skills Strategy.

Jahanara sold her children, 11 and 13, to work as 'slave labour' in a brick factory.

Who is responsible?

"This is Jahanara's fault. She should not have taken the money."

"The blame lies mostly with the loan sharks who exploited her after Hurricane Aila."

"The Bangladeshi government should not allow this kind of poverty. They must take responsibility for the flooding delta."

"Western people have done most to make climate change happen, with their cars and central heating. They are partly to blame for rising sea levels."

"World politics could have stopped climate change, but the global leaders care only about money. It's their fault."

Another cause: not mentioned so far, but partly to blame for the rising sea levels which are destroying Bangladesh.

Use this outline of the pie to get pupils thinking about the complex question of responsibility in relation to climate change and the damage it does. Why did Jahanara sell her own children to a brick factory as slave labourers? You will need enough A3 copies for one between two in your classroom. If you adapt it for other examples of the impact of climate change, make sure you never 'blame the victim'.

Students to write reflective essays on climate, justice and faith

Ask students to use this writing frame to reflect on their analysis and evaluation of different ideas about climate, justice and faith they have been studying. Writing frames like this can be done in millions of different ways if the student selects any ten prompts from at least 5 of the different boxes. A good way to select these is to use a large felt tipped pen to cross out the ones they do not wish to tackle, until only 10 are left. There are over thirty prompts in all. This is also an excellent way to build up the skills needed for the longer written answers required in Standard Grade and GCSE RS examinations.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Beginnings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This essay is about justice and climate change. I have been learning... ▪ What I found fascinating was... ▪ I'm going to write about... ▪ What matters most to me here is... | <p>Arguments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I disagree with people who say... ▪ The main reason I hold my views is... ▪ It's not sensible to argue that... ▪ In my own experience, I find... | <p>Evidence and Beliefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I have been impressed with the evidence for... ▪ I believe the biggest threat we face is... because... ▪ I believe the whole Earth should be fairly shared because... ▪ I believe our planet is precious because... |
| <p>Key ideas about religion and climate justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I think different religions could do more for a green future, for example... ▪ I found out that religions are working on saving the planet, for example... ▪ Prayer: can it help us with saving the Earth? My thoughts are... | <p>Challenges we face</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One challenge is scientific. We need to... understand... ▪ Apathy ('not bothered') is a huge challenge. We have to... ▪ Too many people think they cannot make a difference. We must... ▪ Lots of people don't get it yet. We need to make sure... | <p>Uncertainties + mysteries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An issue I can't make up my mind about is... ▪ A puzzling question about justice is... ▪ I wonder why our political leaders have not... ▪ I'm not sure if we can act in time to... ▪ I'd like to discover more about... |
| <p>What matters?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It really matters to fight for climate justice because... ▪ The contributions of religions matter because... ▪ Being less greedy matters because... ▪ The question I'd love to ask God about this is... | <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In this work, I've been challenged myself by... ▪ I find it challenging to think about... ▪ If I am honest, then I have to admit... ▪ In the light of my work, I now think... ▪ I wonder if God can help us. My thoughts are... | <p>Summarise, Conclude</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From all this RE work, I've learned... ▪ To someone starting this course tomorrow, I'd say... ▪ The most interesting thing about the work on climate justice is... ▪ I believe we can save the Earth if... ▪ I'd also like to say... |