



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 7: Nauru! A Cautionary Tale

A Parable of the World

In this unit, the film explores the way in which the island of Nauru is a parable or microcosm of the entire planet. Nauru is made up of bird lime (bird excreta! Do the students know other words for it?). The island has – literally – sold itself for fertiliser. Greed is only a temporary friend to the people of Nauru, and now they owe huge debts, and are run as a holding camp for migrants. Ask students to list ways in which the story of Nauru is like the story of the planet.

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]

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 showing what has happened where they are ignored!

Summary of the film

Nauru! A Cautionary Tale (approximate length 20:40)

The film clip explores the issue of the state of the Earth through a micro-example: the island of Nauru, a source of fertiliser on an industrial scale.

Export of minerals (actually, birdshit) has left the island with exploited people, big debts and no future, so it is turned into a holding camp for migrants. This is all true, but is also a suitable parable for how the impact of human greed affects the whole Earth. If all you care about is that the cash comes rolling in, then the Earth is just raw material for profit – but there is only one Earth. As the realisation slowly dawns in Nauru that the quick buck is followed by the slow death, they sing, ‘Digging ourselves to death, extracting its final breath...’

Learning Activity 1: A Parable of the World

Watch the drama video clip with the class. Check their understanding of what has happened on this tiny island in the South Pacific. Talk through the idea that the island is like a micro-version of the whole planet.

Discuss these questions:

- Which of these sentences do you agree with:
 - “It is sad that the people of Nauru have been left with nothing, but that’s progress.”
 - “Nauru Island is isolated, and being three hundred kilometres from anywhere makes it a good place for immigrants to be held.”
 - “Nauru is not just a tiny island. It is the world. Full of beauty and treasure, humans trash it all, and fail to think of the consequences.”
- What do students think an agency like the Australian government or the United Nations should do about Nauru? Can they discuss in pairs and share a three-point plan? What does justice demand?

Learning Activity 2: Global Collage

- The creative collaborative activity on page 3 is a very simple, striking and creative way to get student thoughts and commitments on display. Use the activity with a GCSE or Standard Grade class, or get older students to organise and run it with younger pupils.
- Ask students to evaluate this little creative project: do such things have an impact on attitudes? They could take a short questionnaire with other pupils in the school.
- This activity makes a key contribution to exploring the ‘British values’ of liberty, democracy and respect.

Learning Activity 3: Liturgies of Lament and Action

- This activity uses the concepts of lament and action, which both have a part to play in movements for climate justice. A kind of ‘secular liturgy’ is provided here: students need to learn about liturgy in GCSE RS.
- Set up the lesson so that students can read / perform the two liturgies. Ask: How does it feel to speak these ideas out together? Is it useful? Poetic? Dramatic? Embarrassing? Why?
- Consider with students the ways in which these liturgies might be different if Christians were using them in churches. Would Christians add some God talk and some prayers? Would that make the liturgies more powerful?
- Set the task: If you wrote a ‘Liturgy for the Earth’ on the topic of climate justice, what would yours be like? Get students to have a go, writing no more than 12 lines. Suggest they use these texts in a school assembly for younger pupils, and create image sequences or choose music to go with them in PowerPoint, Prezzi or other suitable software.
- When the task is complete, ask students in pairs to consider what they have learned, and note it down.

Change the Earth: a whole school collage

100 students aged 9-10 created this globe out of blue and green rectangles which say 'I am proud to be a citizen of the Earth because...' and 'I will change the world for the better by...'



Lat Blaylock writes: This image was made by 100 pupils aged 9-10. They each took a pre-printed blue piece of paper and a pre-printed green piece, and filled them in:

What makes me glad to be a citizen of the Earth is...

What I will do in my lifetime to make the world a better place is...

The world map was (very roughly) drawn onto 4 sheets of A1 flipchart paper, which had been stuck together with masking tape. Your geography teacher (or almost anyone) can draw a better world than I managed. A small group of pupils then trimmed and stuck the paper squares onto the world image. It was used for whole school display.

I like this activity because it enables every pupil to think for themselves about the big issue of global citizenship and climate justice. For students in the 14+ age range, I would suggest a range of prompts be used, copied from the next page. All students might complete a blue and a green, or add more if they have time.

If your students create an object like this, please send me a photo to lat@retoday.org.uk

Display it in your school hall for awareness raising about global climate justice.

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| <p>What makes me glad to be a citizen of the Earth is...</p> | <p>What I will do in my lifetime to make the world a better place is...</p> |
| <p>'The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it' (Bible). I believe...</p> | <p>People in poverty get the worst of the ecological crisis. We should all...</p> |
| <p>'The Earth is a Garden, the Lord is its Gardener, everything is cherished, nothing is neglected' (Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib). I think:</p> | <p>The urgent need in tackling climate change is...</p> |
| <p>"Earth is sacred, water is sacred, air and fire are sacred, space and time are sacred. Because nature is sacred, we may not manipulate, exploit, pollute or deplete it." (Satish Kumar, a Jain Monk). I think...</p> | <p>Everyone must do their part to save this beautiful planet. I think my part includes...</p> |
| <p>I think the biggest challenges we face on Earth are... because...</p> | <p>What I want government to do about global warming is...</p> |
| <p>'Unless we act together, now, radically and decisively, we condemn our grandchildren to disaster'. I think...</p> | <p>Another thing I want to say...</p> |

Liturgies of lament and action

This final activity picks up a religious tradition of prayer, but does so in a plural and secular context. GCSE RS students, you have to learn about liturgy: here you can try out two liturgies, and create a third of your own if you wish.

One tradition of the Jewish / Christian Psalms is lament: the community takes note of what has gone wrong, and mourns together. The lament below in column 1 can be led by one student or the teacher (black bold text). The rest of the group responds in unison (green italic text). Use soft, quiet voices, or even whispers, for the responses. You might stand together in a circle around the image of the globe you created.

Another tradition of liturgy is more commanding, and expresses a community's intentions. Column 2 gives voice to this kind of liturgy. It is not a prayer. Anyone could join in with it, whatever their religion or belief, if they wanted to. This is best done at a shout. One or two leaders introduce by shouting the lines in black. Everyone responds together in dramatic style.

| Whisper a Lament | Shout out for Action |
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| <p>We have taken the good Earth and spoiled it <i>We have wasted the food</i> <i>We have ruined the land</i> <i>We have not cared for the creatures</i> We have taken the planet for granted <i>We have ignored the climate as it changes</i> <i>We have rushed on, greedy and thoughtless</i> <i>We have not cared for the whole of humanity</i> We have taken more than our share of good things <i>We have overeaten while others starve</i> <i>We have burned petrol and gas with no thought for tomorrow</i> <i>We have dirtied the water our grandchildren must drink</i> We have taken the planet to pieces for greed <i>We have begun to cry at our own foolishness</i> <i>We have begun to notice the danger we have created</i> <i>We have begun to recognise we need to change.</i></p> | <p>We know that this fragile Earth needs care <i>We want to care for our planet more gently</i> <i>We will do more than we have done to save this good Earth</i> We know that we have gone right to the brink of disaster <i>We want to turn back from the edge of disaster</i> <i>We will study, we will struggle, we will not give up hope</i> We know that the Earth can only be saved if everyone does their part <i>We want to do our part</i> <i>We will change our lives</i> We know that climate change has hurt the poor most <i>We want to be part of the movement for climate justice</i> <i>We will pay the price of fairness to support those hurt by climate change.</i></p> |

- Begin by reading the liturgies, and discuss whether you are happy to role play joining in with them. How does it feel to speak these ideas out together? Is it useful? Poetic? Dramatic? Embarrassing?
- In what ways would these liturgies be different if Christians were using them in churches?
- If you wrote a 'Liturgy for the Earth' on the topic of climate justice, what would yours be like? Have a go at writing one no more than 12 lines long.