

Just bananas? Using a country study to explore fairer trade at Key Stage 2

What was the aim of the work?

This work was taught to a mixed ability group of Year 5 children at a primary school in Winchester in Hampshire. The ports of Southampton and Portsmouth, not far from Winchester, are major entry points for bananas and the county also hosts banana ripening facilities providing additional contexts for schools to choose to look at the Caribbean countries through the lens of trade. The topic began with the arrival of a boxed helium balloon with the message 'You have won a holiday to St Lucia' and the pupils were asked to research the island and to prepare for a 'Who wants to be a millionaire' style quiz that will provide the funds for the whole class to go on the trip. The work was planned to teach the geographical aspects of St Lucia as 'a less economically developed country'. This provided a knowledge base that prepared the children to work on the second part of the topic, which uses the Oxfam book 'Go Bananas' to help children argue for and against fairer trade.

What is the link from citizenship to global learning?

- To gain an understanding about people and places outside our community and country.
- To recognise other cultures and identities and respect differences and similarities.
- To discuss and communicate feelings and opinions about different places, people and communities.
- To empathise and develop a sense of commonality with people in other places.
- To understand the notion of the global community.
- To identify ways in which we are dependent on people in other places and how they are dependent on us.
- To make judgments about how trade works, evaluating what may be seen as fairer and unfair trade.

How did the work set about achieving this?

The theme was taught as a term's work with some parts blocked and not always using a weekly lesson. It was also combined successfully with English lessons in order to teach and practise key language skills, especially in speaking and listening and in writing. ICT was used extensively as a tool and resource in researching information and presenting findings and a variety of multi-media artwork was produced. As part of the fairer trade debate, children took on the roles in the chain of people involved in growing, transporting and selling bananas. They heard the opinions of children and adults and were able to explore a range of viewpoints by asking and answering questions, through role-play debate and through their own writing. Design and technology provided a strong cross-curricular link as the children evaluated fairer trade products and made their own biscuits with a secret fairer trade ingredient. They then advertised their products and sold the biscuits to parents.

How well did the activity work?

Initially the school developed this work with support from a citizenship NGO and the local authority. The work was shared across schools within the local authority with the aim of generating a wider debate about how teaching about global issues could be improved, challenging assumptions and providing a common link to schools across the county. By using citizenship as a catalyst for the work and drawing on other subjects, the aim was to broaden the appeal of the county-wide theme. By linking with a well-known Oxfam resource 'Go Bananas', it was hoped to stimulate ease of access and use of materials without one teacher having to take the lead across all schools or develop new materials.

What happened next?

Teachers could use the planning and resources to teach other linked topics. There was scope for extending the study of the rainforest and combining it with work on British woodlands and linking up with local authority and Forestry Commission experts on the use of native woodland near the school. The school found that Design Technology provided an excellent opportunity to involve the children in thinking creatively about the fairer trade debate. The school also linked this work to their Rights Respecting School activities – another initiative taken up by the local authority and developed across all schools. This develops further global understanding about trade from a human rights perspective, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The school was able to draw on ‘expert’ advice on bananas from local import traders and companies providing useful school–business links around a global learning theme, enabling collaboration on learning outcomes and giving the school the opportunity to share their work with the local community

More information and links

Details on Oxfam’s work with the banana trade can be found via this link <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/go-bananas> as can further work on fairer trade.

More information on fair trade can be found via these links: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/gobananas/> and http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/schools/support_resources/organisations.aspx

The Rights Respecting School Award and scheme can be found on the UNICEF website <http://www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa>