

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EARTH



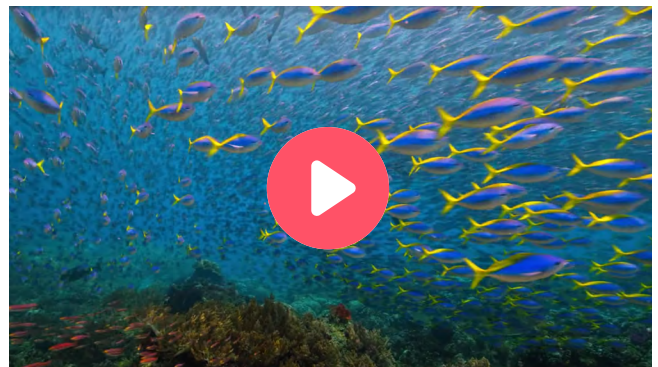
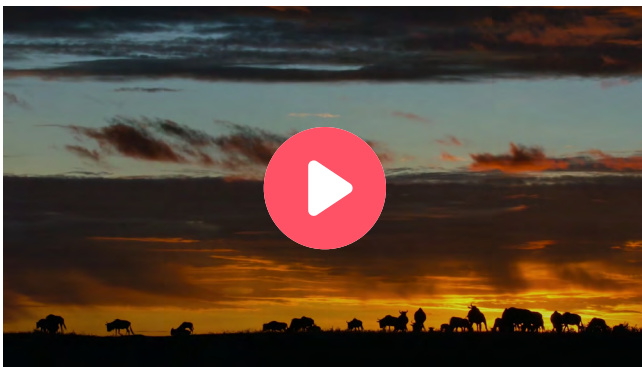
FOR CHILDREN AGED 4 - 11

The following cross-curricular activities act as a stimulus for writing a Letter to the Earth and are designed to provoke a creative response in young people. You can complete as many or as few of the preparatory activities as you like. They invite young people to connect with their feelings about the Earth and the climate and nature crisis, and to consider how we can make change.

These resources are for teachers, parents/care-givers and young people to use both at home and in the classroom – in subject lessons, PSHE, form time and 'Eco Events'. For additional learning materials on this subject matter, please see our [powerpoint presentation](#).

Introduction: Our Connection to Planet Earth

We begin by cultivating a relationship between children and nature that is based on awe, wonder and love.



WATCH clips from David Attenborough's series *Our Planet*.

It features a range of habitats and gives a sense of the many wonderful places and creatures our Earth is host to.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cl_kXbhTi8k

QUESTIONS

- Do any words or feelings come into your mind as you watch the video?
- What did you love about the video?
- What is your favourite animal?
- What is your favourite place on Earth?
- What about the Earth is most precious to you?

EXERCISE

Imagine you have made contact with aliens. Draw a picture or write a description of your favourite places on Earth.



Exploring issues affecting Planet Earth through children's books and stories

The following stories introduce the themes of the value of nature and the impact of climate change in a way that engages children's imaginations.



READ *Dinosaurs and All that Rubbish*

by Michael Foreman.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oUxR437_d0

DISCUSS

What did the man do to planet Earth?

- Show a picture of the ruined Earth from the book and the picture of the Earth once the dinosaurs have restored it: Which version of Earth is most like the planet we live on today?
- Have you noticed or heard about any of the ways our planet is being damaged by things people do? (Option to show pictures of traffic pollution, trees being cut down, plastic in the ocean, etc)
- Why did the man trash planet Earth? Did he get what he wanted in the end?

EXERCISE

Write a letter to the man in the story persuading him not to build a rocket to reach the stars. What are your most persuasive arguments?



READ *The Promise* by Nicola Davies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3LmiUIP3Cg>

DISCUSS

- Why was the old lady's bag precious?
- What effect did the saplings have on the people in the story? Why did the new trees cause the people to smile, laugh and have tea together?
- What did you think of the city in the book? Do you think that there are places like that on Earth in real life?
- Look at the page where trees are described as "spreading through the city like a song, breathing to the sky, drawing down the rain like a blessing." What does the author mean by this?

EXERCISE

How could you make your local area greener? Walk around your local area and find a spot where plants could be growing. Write to your council and ask them to rewild it.

Plant a seed from a piece of fruit or vegetables and watch it grow.



Nature connection activities

Spending time outdoors and connecting with the natural world helps children want to care for it. By experiencing and talking about nature we can help children to understand its importance and the effect it has on their lives.

Here are some other great outdoor activities including making dens and creating wild art:
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/50-things-to-do-before-youre-11--activity-list>

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EXERCISE

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. This could be a feather, shell, stone, or twig, for example.



Photo: courtesy of National Trust

Experiments: What is Climate Change?

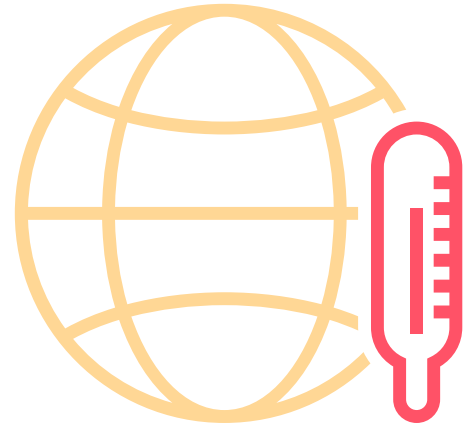
The following experiments provide children with the opportunity to learn about the climate emergency in a practical and sensory way.

Global warming experiment

You will need: A globe or large ball, several warm jumpers or blankets

Show the globe and tell them that this represents planet Earth, where we live. Wrap the first jumper around the Earth.

The jumper represents Earth's atmosphere. Carbon Dioxide, (CO₂) in the Earth's atmosphere traps the sun's heat and keeps Earth warm. This is called the greenhouse effect. Without greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide, our oceans would be frozen solid and Earth would be too cold for humans to live on. The problem is that the activities of some humans cause pollution, meaning that too much CO₂ is being emitted into our atmosphere. This is a bit like putting extra jumpers on the Earth. (*Put an extra jumper on the Earth*). Every year more and more carbon is going into our atmosphere. This is like putting more and more jumpers or blankets around the Earth. Too much heat from the sun is getting trapped in our atmosphere and can't get out because too much carbon is being emitted.



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QUESTIONS

- How would it feel to have to wear so many jumpers? (Try putting some on to see!)
- What do you think the Earth would say if it could talk?
- Do you know any of the effects that global warming has on our planet?



Icecap melting experiment

Set up an icy scene in a tray or bowl. Fill the tray with ice, stones and plastic polar animals (polar bears, seals, fish). Use a ruler to measure how much water is at the bottom of the bowl or tray as the ice melts, and note how the water level rises. Try the experiment with two identical bowls: leave one in the sun and one in the shade. Which one melts first?

EXERCISE

Write up the results of the experiment. Record ice levels every 30 mins in a table.

QUESTIONS

- What do the results of the experiment tell us about climate change?
- How do you think it feels for the polar animals to be flooded?
[NOTE: FISH AND SEALS WON'T MIND BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN WATER, ALTHOUGH SEALS COME ONTO ICE TO CUB]
- What do you think the polar animals would say if they could talk?

Drama activities: What would the Earth say?

These activities allow children to explore the themes of nature connection and climate change through drama and language, giving them the opportunity to ask questions of an adult.

Hot seating as Planet Earth

(This follows on well from the global warming experiment.)

The adult tells the children that a very special visitor is coming to see them, Mother Earth. Ask the children to think of some questions to ask the Earth. When the children are ready to interview the Earth, the adult leaves the room and gets dressed up in a blue and/or green shawl or blanket. Option to use blue and green face paint as well. Children then ask the adult questions, who answers in character as the Earth. Alternatively or in addition, children could transform themselves into the Earth and try and answer their own or each other's questions.

Give the Earth a Voice

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

EXERCISE

Jot down some words that came up during the above activities. Can you use them to write a poem?



Mindfulness/ Stillness exercises

Thinking about the Earth, the climate 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 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? What might it have seen or experienced during its life cycle? Imagine you are the leaf for a moment. Let your thoughts come and go like clouds coming and going.

Imagine you are having a conversation with your leaf. What would you like to ask? What might this leaf want to tell you?

Writing and Sharing Your Letter

Your children are invited to write and share a Letter to the Earth. The prompts below will guide them.



Credit: Talia Woodin

Your voice matters!

What or who will you speak up for? What is your message for change? Who will you write to?

Consider the following:

◆ This is your Letter. You can be really creative about how you write it. It can be poetic, dramatic, a call to action. Your Letter can be addressed to whomever you want. It could be written to the Earth, or future or past generations, another species such as an animal

or plant or a tree, or a place that's special to you. It could be written to someone in a position of power or influence.

◆ You can also write from the perspective of another species, or the Earth or the future, for example. How can you give a voice to something that matters to you? What do they have to say?

◆ How are you going to communicate your feelings about this planet we all call home? What decisions will you make in your writing to best show the reader what you care about on our Earth and what you have to say?

PROMPTS

What I love most about nature is...

When I think about the future, I feel...

If I could change anything about the state of the planet I would...

If I was giving the Earth or another species a voice it would say...





Let's make change!

Now that the letters have been written, here's some ideas on how they can be used to create change.

Your feelings and ideas are really important and deserve to be heard.

Read your Letter

Could you organise an event or a meeting where you can read your Letter publicly to spark conversation between people? Could this be with your family, friends, classroom, in a school assembly or town hall?

Invite people to write and read letters together. When listening to letters, hear what common themes come up in people's writing and discover things you'd like to take action on. Can you organise an **Action Group** to start making the changes you want to see? Can you become a **Change-Maker**?

Who could you invite that can help you make change?

Share your Letter

How can your letter be seen by as many people as possible to make as big a difference as possible for the planet?

You can share your letter with us at www.letterstotheearth.com and we'll help you get it to the right people and places.

You can also share your letter, a picture or video of you speaking it on social media using the hashtag **#LetterstotheEarth**

Instagram: [@letterstotheearth_](https://www.instagram.com/letterstotheearth_)

Facebook: [@letterstotheearth](https://www.facebook.com/letterstotheearth)

Twitter: [@letterstoeearth_](https://twitter.com/letterstoeearth)

Send your Letter

Who could you post or send your Letter to?

Someone who has power in your school or local area or country? If you send them your Letter, showing them exactly how you feel about our planet, along with some suggestions for how to better protect it, will they listen and make a change?

Who else could you invite to write a Letter?

You could also distill your Letter down to a few key phrases to turn into a poster, banner or piece of artwork.

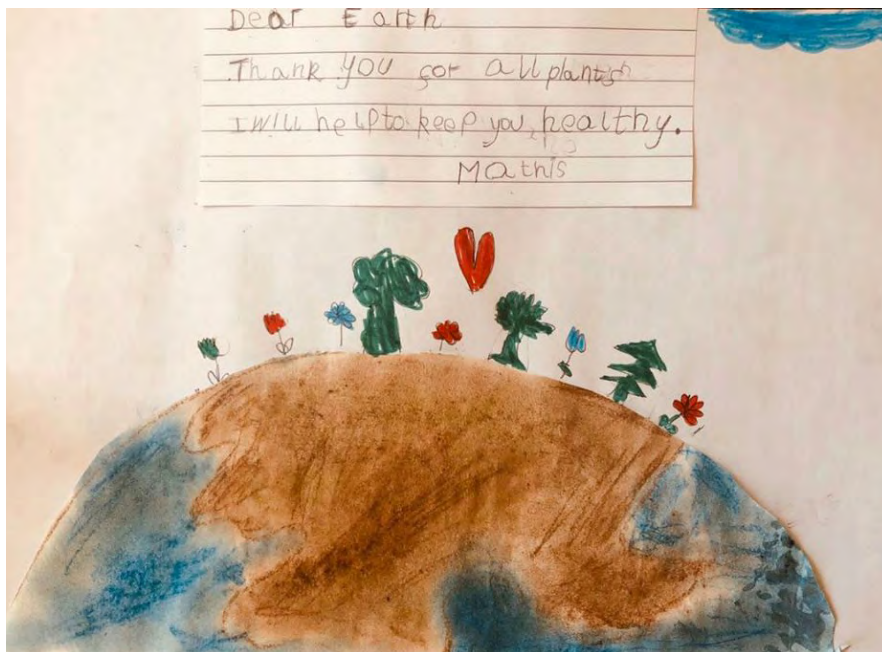
Thanks to the support of



Vivobarefoot Kids is a footwear brand that aims to reconnect young people with the natural world. We believe that human health depends on the health of our planet and are proud to support Letters to the Earth with whom we share our mission.



Appendix - Excerpts of Example Letters



What could your own drawing
or Letter to the Earth look like?
Grab some coloured pencils
and some paper and give it a go!



Appendix - Excerpts of Example Letters

What have we done to the
Planet?

I don't know about you,
but this is how I feel
about Mother Nature.
We have become Mother
Nature's enemy.
The Planet is dying.
Mother Nature is Crying
Out for help.
We need to start working
together.
You may think the planet
is not crying but it is.
Mother Nature is inside of us,
She is all around us. She
made us be alive.
For if she were not alive,
we would not live.
We must thank her
every day.

Tabitha Ravula
Age 7½

What do you think we have
to thank mother nature for?
What do you think is meant
when the writer says
'Mother nature is inside of us?'

For more examples and inspiration, visit www.letterstotheearth.com and buy our book at Bookshop.org

