

## A creative approach to geography in a cross-curricular day

Sue Parsons from Joy Lane Juniors shares her creative use of thinking skills with Year 6.

**Year group:** 6

**Theme:** Is the Earth Precious?

**Rationale:**

- The main aim of this day is to encourage the children to think about and express their own opinions and values about the world in which they live. A key point to be made from the outset is that there are no right/wrong answers and that children's contributions to any discussions will not be judged. Many key questions will start with 'if...'

**Learning and teaching for the day:**

- The day starts with the question, 'Is the Earth precious?' Rather than responding immediately, pupils are asked to qualify their initial thought and, if necessary, change it. Answers elicited - both yes and no - stressing the need to explain reasoning. Ideas for writing a balanced argument are modelled, using useful connectives e.g. 'however', 'despite', 'moreover' etc.
- Next, in the Hall they are led on a 'guided fantasy' to help them to envisage the Earth, but on a small scale, so they can begin to appreciate the variety of landscapes and environments. This will lead on to studying the text, 'If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, people would...' and teasing out any concepts/difficult vocabulary e.g. 'marvel', 'sacred'. Creative artwork will then be encouraged, allowing the children to represent their ideas pictorially, but **not** necessarily geographically accurately.
- Next, children study the poem '*Earth's Clock*' which works on the premise that the Earth has existed for 24 hours. When do they think humans 'arrived'? (30 seconds to midnight!) Timelines are used to help sequence and visualise events in the planet's evolution. What might happen next? This is a difficult concept for some children, but usually evokes some amazing responses, in both the philosophical and spiritual dimensions.
- To reinforce how varied the natural world is, Nick Inkpen & Mick Butterworth's book '*Wonderful Earth*' is used. This begins to introduce the idea that, for a creature so intelligent, human beings have made rather a mess of much of the planet, and that things can change for the better but it relies on **them**.
- Design work builds on previous Y5 work on windfarms and encourages the integration of modern technologies - using renewable energy sources and environmentally friendly ideas - in the design of a small community or dwelling for the near future. Diagrams, annotations and explanations will be expected.
- At this point the children will be asked to spend some time studying each others' work and feed back on what they think are particularly successful, or clever ideas.
- The day will be rounded off with some shocking and thought-provoking statistics from the book '*If the World were a Village*', which gives the percentages of people who have access to education, clean air, food etc.
- Finally, they will be asked again 'Is the Earth Precious?'

**Useful texts:**

- '*Wonderful Earth*' by Nick Inkpen & Mick Butterworth, John Hunt Ltd: 2003.
- 'If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, people would...' not sure of the original location or actual title, but found within Letts Literacy Activity Book (& poster) unit 3.10, of which many schools have multiple copies.
- '*Earth's Clock*' - poem by Pat Moon, p.208 in '*The Works 2 - Poems on Every Subject and for Every Occasion*' by Brian Moses & Pie Corbett, Macmillan Children's Books: 2002. ISBN 0-330-39902-0
- '*If the World Were a Village*' by David J Smith & Shelagh Armstrong, Oxfam: 2004. ISBN 0-7136-6880-6