

Lesson Plan 5 Do environmentalists do more harm than good?

This fifth lesson in the package sees students exploring the scenario of discussing an issue with someone from a completely different background.

Factor:

Our own identities, beliefs and backgrounds shape our views and outlooks; these can be vastly different, and this can make reaching common ground feel impossible.

Skill:

Acceptance, including difference. The aim here is to truly internalise the mantra 'It's ok to disagree' and move towards being open to learning something from people we can't necessarily agree with.

References:

<https://cei.org/content/environmentalists-are-bad-environment>

<https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/extinction-rebellion-city-airport-protests-scli-gbr-intl/index.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/21/dams-wellies-and-sleepless-nights-yorkshire-calder-valley-flooding>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilyeoh/2018/04/14/going-vegan-eating-sustainable-beef-can-be-good-for-the-environment/#7b8e488267ea>

<https://www.onegreenplanet.org/environment/why-tofu-consumption-is-not-responsible-for-soy-related-deforestation/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/25/veganism-intensively-farmed-meat-dairy-soya-maize>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/soy>



Learning Objectives

- To be able to understand how our own identities, backgrounds and experiences shape our views
- To practice the skill of accepting and moving past difference
- To explore learning something new from those we can't agree with

Preparation

- F&BF 'Controversial Issues' film
- PowerPoint 5 for class
- Safe Space Agreement and 'Parking' sheet
- 'Environmentalism and Me' worksheet, one per student
- 'Top Tips for acceptance' handout, one per student
- Sheets for 'Carousel' activity

Running time:

50 mins

Curriculum mapping

These pages show indicative maps of where we think this package fits with the RE, PSHE and Citizenship curricula:

Subject RE	
<p>1 Living Difference III</p> <p>Approach to enquiry five key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate and Apply to their own and others' experience• Enquire and Contextualise to engage intellectually• Evaluate to discern value for others and themselves	<p>2 The national curriculum framework for RE (NCFRE)</p> <p>KS3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• B2. Observe and interpret a wide range of ways in which commitment and identity are expressed. They develop insightful analysis and evaluation of controversies about commitment to religions and worldviews, accounting for the impact of diversity within and between communities.• C3. Explore and express insights into significant moral and ethical questions posed by being human in ways that are well-informed and which invite personal response, using reasoning which may draw on a range of examples from real life, fiction or other forms of media.

Curriculum mapping

Subject PSHE	
PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE education <i>Updated to include the statutory requirements outlined in the new RSE curriculum</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">CORE THEME 3: LIVING IN THE WIDER WORLD	
<p>KS3 Learning opportunities in Living in the Wider World</p> <p>Choices and pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">L10. to recognise and challenge stereotypes and family or cultural expectations that may limit aspirations <p>Media literacy and digital resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">L23. to recognise the importance of seeking a variety of perspectives on issues and ways of assessing the evidence which supports those viewsL26. that on any issue there will be a range of viewpoints; to recognise the potential influence of extreme views on people's attitudes and behaviours	<p>KS4 Learning opportunities in Living in the Wider World</p> <p>Media literacy and digital resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">L27. strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content

Curriculum mapping

Subject Citizenship	
Citizenship programmes of study: National curriculum in England	
KS3 Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding whilst developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.	KS4 Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society.

Lesson 5 PPT

Recap the skills we've looked at so far in this package (confidence, critical thinking and emotional intelligence). Spend a couple of minutes going over the top tips from each.

Safe Space Agreement

Explain that this lesson we'll be looking at an issue now commonly associated with youth. Firstly, review and make any additions to your **Safe Space Agreement** and once again point to the 'parking' sheet. Then, write the question '**Do environmentalists do more harm than good?**' on the board.

'Parking' sheet

Ask students to discuss with the person next to them for a under a minute, and then take some responses and write these on the board.

F&BF

'Controversial Issues' film

Then play the relevant scene from the film and ask 'what's happening here?'. (Both characters are influenced by their backgrounds (either yellow or blue) and see the current topic from that perspective. Neither can see the other's background – or, therefore – understand the other's perspective.) You can use the following questions:

- Have you ever felt like you've fundamentally disagreed with someone?
- What are the factors in these characters' disagreements?
- How do they feel and what path does the conversation look like it will take?
- What do the blue and yellow-themed images in their thought bubbles symbolise? How do these affect what they say?
- What might those scenes be in our case?

Explain that this session will be exploring that particular scenario and some ways to navigate it, through the topic of whether environmentalists do more harm than good.

Main Activity Environmentalism and Us / 30 mins

'Environmentalism and Me' worksheet, one per student

Part One

Give each of your students an 'Environmentalism and Me' worksheet. If you have completed our Identity package with your students, they may want to cast their mind back to the lesson around their values, and how they shape their current belief and practices.

Explain the sections, modelling your own, and that they have 15 minutes to complete it. They can work in pairs or small groups if they want to but their worksheets must be completed individually.

Controversial Issue: **Do environmentalists do more harm than good?**

Complete the following sentences:

- I believe...
- My relevant values to this belief are...
- The life experience that has given rise to this belief is...
- The ways in which I practice this believe are...

Read through the following testimonies and complete the following sentences for each person:

- X believes...
- The life experience that has given rise to this belief is...

Main Activity Environmentalism and Us / 30 mins

Testimony 1: Simon

'I own a cattle farm in Wales. I do think that environmentalists make some good points (and even my own daughter is passionately vegetarian due to growing up with our animals!), but the widespread trend to move towards veganism is actually doing our environment more harm than good, I believe. Firstly because beef production can be regenerative rather than degenerative when managed properly, helping to restore soils and biodiversity and sequester carbon – but this is lost on some activists. Secondly because a fixation on alternatives like soy leads to deforestation as well as high greenhouse gas emissions. Grazing animals may be the best long-term option for us and I fear environmentalists are doing more damage than they realise!'

Testimony 2: Maya

'My name is Maya, I'm 24 years old. I grew up in Calder Valley in Yorkshire – you may have heard of us as we're constantly being hit by bad storms and floods! My entire house has been flooded six times in the last five years. I've given up on installing carpet and am beginning to feel wary of ever switching any electricity on downstairs. I personally think the flooding is due to all the deforestation happening in the area, and I've read that global warming can impact rainfall. I wasn't too concerned about climate change when I was younger but now I salute all the people fighting to make the government take necessary action – their work is vital!'

Testimony 3: Kyri

'I'm Kyri and I'm part of the Ground Operations team and London Airport. To be honest, after what I've seen, I think it's highly appropriate that Environmental and animal rights activists have been referred to the government's controversial anti-radicalisation programme. They've been blocking entrances, delaying flights and one protestor even climbed on top of a plane on a runway – ridiculously dangerous and disruptive for everyone. My colleague thinks they're fantastic and is keen to join, which I can't understand; we see the traffic day in day out and know full well how much development we owe to our ability to fly. Entire sectors depend on aviation; I don't think we can reduce the whole debate to 'planes are bad for the environment'. The irony is more fuel was burnt that day due to the delay they caused!'

Part Two

Then play the relevant scene from the film and ask what's happening here. (The two characters have **accepted** that they see something differently and stopped arguing over whether the object is blue or yellow. Instead they've chosen to listen and learn more about the perspective of the other person. Their language shows **appreciation** for that person's viewpoint and an open mind to learn something from them).

Once you have discussed this, explain that you'll be practicing this skill of accepting difference, appreciating the other person's perspective and trying to learn something from them anyway. (You can write these key words, underlined above, on the board as well as any other student suggestions).

Ask your students to get into pairs and choose two testimonies from characters who seem to have different beliefs on the matter. Explain that they will spend ten minutes creating a role play, each taking on the persona of one of these two characters. They should imagine these two characters have met and have gotten onto the subject of whether environmentalists do more harm than good. Their role play should include:

- A bit of context about where they have met
- Each person introducing themselves and giving their opinions on the matter
- Both people asking the other about the life experiences that have shaped their views, and explaining
- Both people finding one thing they can learn from the other, or one strength in the other person's argument
- Both people reflecting on one weakness in their own argument, in light of the discussion

Main Activity Environmentalism and Us / 30 mins

Explain that they can write the script out together if they would like to.

Once they have done this, ask some pairs to volunteer to perform their role play in front of the whole class. Ask the class for feedback.

Note:

The characters in this worksheet are somewhat two-dimensional. For the purposes of this activity we're looking for differences that are easy to find and difficult to traverse. However, no issue is binary nor can anyone be profiled. We must hold assumptions lightly and make space for nuance surrounding any issue.

Reflection / 10 mins

Sheets for
'Carousel' activity

Lay three (or six, depending on the size of your class) 'Carousel' A2 sheets out across the room with coloured pens. Each sheet of paper should have one of the following written on it:

- One thing that I thought about differently today
- One behaviour I will change going forward
- One aspect of myself / someone else I have understood better

'Top Tips for
acceptance'
handout,
one per student

Students must silently go to each of these pieces of paper, read the thoughts written so far and add their own. Bring your class back together, welcome volunteers to share anything they wrote during the Carousel and then take any closing comments. If you are following the package, distribute this week's 'top tips' and ask the students to stick them in their books.

Key skill for engaging in controversial discussion: acceptance

Top tips for navigating fundamental differences on an issue:

- Understand which aspect of your identity or life experience is shaping your view on this particular issue
- Try to understand through research or dialogue what experience is shaping the viewpoint of the person or group that you disagree with
- Accept that difference is a fundamental fact of life
- Recognise when a conversation is no longer making room for understanding, or when one party is trying to 'convert' the other
- Steer your mindset and the conversation towards what you may be able to learn or share in any case, without needing to 'agree' or 'win'
- Understand that you can admire or respect something in someone else's experience without having to negate or erase your own

Homework / preparation for next lesson

Explain the homework below and model an example.

Ask your students to choose an issue they feel very strongly about, and which is closely linked to an important aspect of their identity. It doesn't need to be too personal to them (it should be an issue they have or would feel comfortable talking to you about) and the issue itself doesn't need to widely be considered controversial.

They should write 500 words engaging with the opinion of a public figure or group whom they strongly disagree with. Their work should answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the issue and what do we each believe?
- 2 How has my identity or life experience shaped my view on this? How has theirs?
- 3 Are there any truly fundamental differences between our viewpoints?
- 4 Is there anything I can admire about or learn from their perspective?
- 5 Does engaging with their argument point to any weakness in my own argument?