

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EARTH



FOR CHILDREN AGED 12 - 16

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](#).

Introducing Our Home, Planet Earth

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

In 1968 humans first went to the moon. On that trip they took the first photo of our planet, Earth. The crew were awe-inspired by seeing our own planet hanging in space.

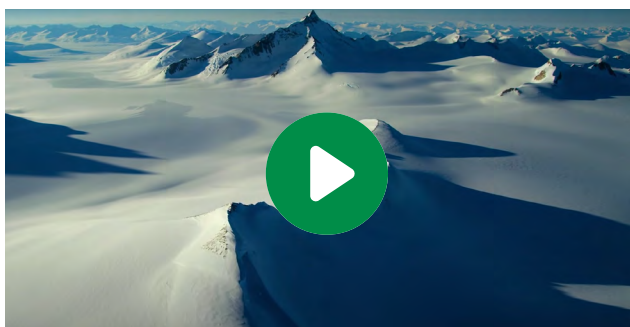
The photo later became known as “Earthrise” and the image of the world rising in the dark vastness of space over a sun-lit lunar landscape became an iconic reminder of our lonely planet’s splendid isolation and delicate fragility.

→ *How does it make you feel to see the Earth from this perspective?*

The Earth is the only planet known so far to harbour life. Human beings only evolved on Earth in the last sliver of the planet’s history – before us there have been dinosaurs, five extinctions, and five ice ages.

→ *How does that make you feel?*

→ *How well do you think humans are looking after planet Earth and the other species that we share it with?*



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

Consider - What do you find most amazing about our home, Planet Earth?



EXERCISE

Create a map of the world with places that are special to you or that you have a connection with. These could be places you have visited, read a book or seen a film about, that you have family in or that are part of your heritage. What is special about these places?

If you have space, chalk out a giant world map of the continents on the floor. Try moving between the places you have a connection with. Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to stand in each place. What do you love most about the place you are standing in?

Nature connection activities

Spending time outdoors and connecting with the natural world builds our relationship to it and helps us understand its importance.

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?

Discover a favourite tree, or something you'd like to observe more closely. This could be a feather, shell, stone, twig for example.

Observe if and how your mood changes when you are with nature.

Sketch a detail of something you have chosen - a petal, leaf, piece of bark, twig or anything that has caught your eye - trying to capture the tiny details.

Give the Earth a Voice

Have you seen this little guy before? This is the Lorax, the famous character from Dr Seuss's children's book of the same name. The Lorax tried to be a tree defender in the story, saying "I speak for the trees because the trees have no tongues".



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

Human's Relationship to Planet Earth

The below considers human's actions and responsibilities on Earth.



CONSIDER

- How have humans changed the world?
- What does the 'Age of Humans' look and feel like?
- Do you think all humans are responsible for the climate and ecological crisis?



EXERCISE

Research which countries have the highest Carbon Footprints per capita.
What demographics are likely to have higher carbon footprints?



EXERCISE

Consider the following debate

For: Governments and corporations create the systems that we all live within. We must focus on pressuring them to make the changes necessary to reduce global warming.

Against: As long as we use fossil fuels we are part of the problem. Change begins at home and we must focus on making changes in our own lives and encouraging others to do the same.
Jot down some notes for and against.

Is there a valid argument for both?

Land Defenders

Here we look at some of the people taking action to protect nature.

Indigenous people are the earliest inhabitants of a country and often have a unique knowledge and expertise on how to look after nature and live sustainably. The UN estimates that the land that Indigenous Peoples live on is home to 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity. Indigenous land protection is also the most effective form of conservation. Indigenous-occupied land is better preserved than even government-protected areas like parks and wildlife reserves in Canada, Australia and Brazil.

Indigenous people have the legal right to be consulted about any action that might affect their ancestral land. Unfortunately governments often ignore this in order to pursue projects that lead to deforestation, or fossil fuel extraction.

The people pictured here are members of the Kayapo and are blocking a highway in Brazil to protest illegal deforestation in and around their territories. What do you think they are thinking and feeling?



Credit: AFP via Getty Images



WATCH tribes fighting to save their dying rainforest:

<https://bit.ly/LTTE-amazon-fires>

EXERCISE

Research how other indigenous groups are defending the land we all rely on.



Young Voices

Let's hear from young people already standing up for our Earth and their communities.

Dear Earth,

I write on behalf of my family, on behalf of my country and the 31 million residents currently living in a place I call home, Peru.

A place where my family had to be woken up in the middle of the night to evacuate their home because of the earthquakes that are affecting their day-to-day lives.

A place where the people with the least money are the ones that suffer the most.

And yet, a big part of our society continues to turn a blind eye, as climate change isn't 'affecting us' – or even completely denies the fact that climate change is a thing.

The sad truth is that most of the time the people and businesses who contribute to global warming the most aren't the ones who are suffering right now – and as they aren't the ones suffering right now climate change must not exist, right?

Tell me how can we turn a blind eye to climate change when it is responsible for 150,000 deaths each year around the world? As if my natives and indigenous people from the Amazon are just obstacles or burdens, not people, like you and me. Whose homes are being taken away from them by major corporations that believe deforestation is just about cutting trees and do not dare to think about the consequences that it has on the hundreds of species of plants, insects, birds and mammals that vanish each day, for ever.

Because, somehow, making money from businesses and properties has become more valuable than life itself.

Therefore, I apologise to you, earth, and to the millions of people suffering currently because of the 'controversial' topic we call climate change.

Daniela Torres Perez, 17



Credit: Gareth Morris

QUESTIONS

- What emotions does Daniela convey and how does she convey them?
- Which words and phrases give this letter power and ensure it has an impact on the reader?
- Why do you think Daniela cares so much about the climate crisis?
- Daniela describes Peru as a place where “the people with the least money are the ones that suffer the most”. Why do you think she has included this in her letter? How does she see this as connected to climate change?





WATCH Mari Copeny aka Little Miss Flint who protested a water crisis.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Utf811mKPrs>

Mari is an activist from Flint in Michigan, USA. In 2014, Flint suffered an environmental disaster when their water became poisoned with lead, making it potentially fatal to drink or bathe in. When she was just 8, Mari wrote to President Obama, inviting him to her city. He subsequently

approved \$100 million dollars in aid to help the city. She continues to fight against injustice and speak out against environmental racism, refusing to let her young age prevent her from advocating for her community.

- *What would you like to change in your home, school or community?*
- *Make a list. Which of the problems on your list are you most passionate about?*
- *Which people are likely to listen to you and help make change?*

Time for Action! Writing and Sharing Your Letter

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



Credit: Talia Woodin

Your voice matters!

Now is the time for innovation, creativity and possibility. There are many taking action around the world and you can too!

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. What could you tell the powerful people of the world about how you feel about the Earth and what you'd like to be changed?
- ◆ 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 do you want to invite to hear your letter who could help you make change?

Share your Letter

How can your letter be seen by as many people as possible so as 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: [@letterstoearth_](https://twitter.com/letterstoearth_)

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 so as to start a conversation?

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 is a B-Corp certified footwear brand that aims to reconnect people and planet. 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

Dear Planet Earth,

I am sorry we have misused you, messed you up,
and physically abused you.

Now we are pleading for forgiveness, although we have done
nothing to stop it, we just brought it upon ourselves.

It's like watching a paper fall, and instead of catching it you watch
it drop to the floor.

It's like watching a child drown, and instead of saving him,
you slowly watch him sink, sink slowly to the ground.

...

I'm sorry that when you stumbled and fell, we didn't kiss your
bruise better: we didn't place a plaster over your cut: we didn't
even blow it better, we just left it, untouched. I'm sorry that we
paid more attention to our problems, than we did yours. For we
forgot that you, planet earth, are the reason we breathe and live,
and us humans let that message pass our minds, way too quickly.

And for that I am truly sorry. Help me correct our mistake.
Help me catch our world: save our planet.

Jenny Ngugi, 13

What do you think of this letter?

Do you have any questions about it?

Do you agree with the writer that we have
“messed up” our Earth?

How could you expand upon Jenny's ask
for people to ‘save our planet’?



Appendix - Excerpts of Example Letters

Dear Government (or whomever it may concern),

Please. I beg. She begs. He begs. Greg from work begs. Pat from school begs. Johnny from Sainsbury's checkout begs. We all beg. On behalf of our planet, we beg. You wouldn't smash up your television screen or destroy your furniture or wreck your grand piano. Just for your plastic bag or your crisp packet or your McDonald's straw. This means that you definitely wouldn't watch your world rapidly die and suffer under your watch. Just for your children. Your grandchildren. Your great-grandchildren and all the future generations to come. But you do.

....

Animals can't help with climate change. Animals can't stop driving cars which pollute the air. Animals can't stop launching rockets into the sky, wasting materials and sending junk into the atmosphere, and around it. Animals can't stop driving noisy speedboats and jet skis and cruise ships which send oil into our oceans and mess with whale calls. Even if they could, why should they? They didn't start this, we did. It's our responsibility to do something before it's too late and you need to make sure that happens. Stop fussing on tiny problems such as Brexit, start focusing on the more important things in life. That thing is life.

Lilli Hearsey, 11

What stands out about this letter?

If you were writing a letter to your government what would you say?

How could you invite those in power to really listen to you?

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

