Change the story.

Creating new climate stories across Europe

Part 1. PAST TO PRESENT

'Change the Story' empowers pupils to create the future they want: to explore how the climate crisis impacts their lives and to create meaningful stories about how the climate crisis is being tackled now, and what needs to be done in the future. Pupils explore stories of change from past to present, investigate the stories of change-makers in the present, and create their own stories about how they envision the future. Pupils share their new narratives using digital tools and have the opportunity to disseminate them widely, encouraging people in their school, community and across Europe to take action.

In order to achieve these ends, these resources follow a framework where pupils explore processes of change:

- **firstly, past-to-present changes;**

- **then a look at present-day change-makers;**

- **before creating their own change stories for the future.**

The project builds up to these future stories and pupils may wish to view what others have done to get inspiration and to clarify what they are working towards: **see project website.**

Part 1 looks at teaching about change in the past.

www.changethestory.eu/uk

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Before you start:
notes for teachers

Pitch

The resources are pitched at upper KS2 (ages 9-11), but the activities involved have also been successfully delivered for Year 4 (ages 8-9) and could be adapted for use at KS3 (ages 11-14). In trialling and developing these materials, some teachers have found it helpful to differentiate their approach within the classroom, so as to provide extra support or additional challenge for those learners who require it.

Climate basics

There is an expectation that pupils already have some understanding of basic climate science. You may wish to review pupils' understanding of this at the start, especially if climate science has not already been taught. There are some useful links to age-appropriate resources in **Part 2** and there are links to credible organisations responding to frequently asked questions below (Making, Activity 1). Meanwhile, **Teacher Support – the climate crisis** helps you explore your own understanding of, and thinking about, climate change.

"It is important to make sure that children know what climate change is, what causes it, to be solid about the Science." – *Year 4/5 teacher.*

Time

It is essential to allow sufficient time for each part of the work, so as not to overly compress the futures element. Advice from teachers using these materials is that it is also best to organise the three parts so that they can run into each other, rather than to leave long gaps between them. This will help support pupils' conceptual understanding of the work as a whole.

"Time is the big thing. If you are going to do it well, it needs time. I am doing the topic back-to-back next year, I wouldn't spread it out, but would rather flow one part to another … I'd roll Past, Present and Future quite close together" – *Year 6 teacher.*
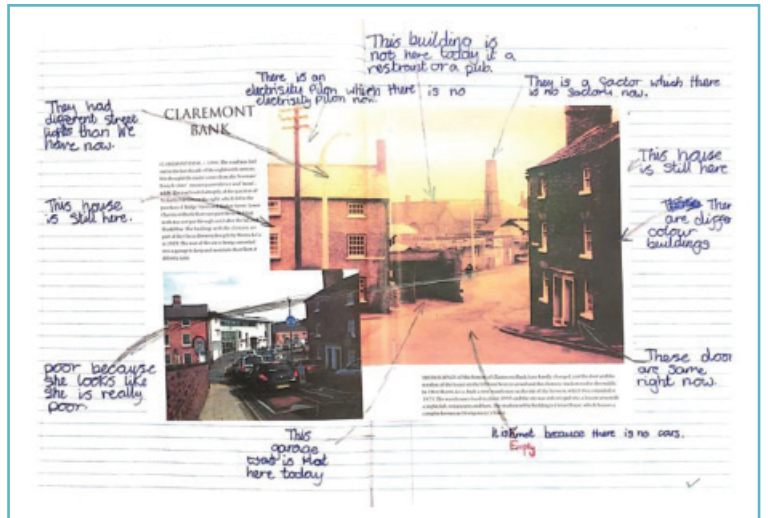
Digital stories

"I enjoyed the ANIMATION!!!! I really enjoyed this because it was lots of fun!" – *Year 4 pupil.*

The focus of the project is the climate crisis and using stories to both understand it and positively influence it. There are stories from the past and how they shape the present. Stories of people making a difference today. And the stories pupils create, which highlight their aspirations for the future. Through the Change the Story website, pupils' stories can be shared with young people around Europe, creating a sense of acting together and excitement.

It is useful to plan for this early on. Take stock of the devices available to you. If your devices consist of a laptop and the school digital camera then you might choose to work with PowerPoint, Publisher, Word, Photos or Movie Maker to share pupil stories. If you have access to a tablet, you should have access to a wide range of tools and therefore a wide range of formats, including stop motion animation and comic strip.

Creating a gallery of original photos, text, drawings and short videos from the moment you start the project is a good way to ensure your pupils have a bank of resources to select from when they come to make and share their stories digitally. There are opportunities to pause and think about this at the end of the 'Past' and 'Present' sections of this resource.

Display the gallery on a digital platform such as Padlet, update it regularly and involve the pupils in the selection of material to include. This should help to reinforce the importance of using only original, non-copyrighted content while also developing your pupils' awareness of their own e-safety and data protection. **Teacher Support – digital story making** has more suggestions about working with digital tools.
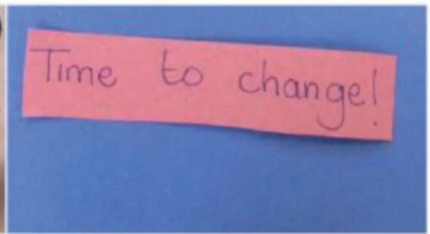
Change the Story.

Stop Climate Change

Sade Hayatlar (Simple Lives)

Time to Change

Kompost yap, toprağa toprak kat (make compost add soil to the earth)

Barısın Yolculugu (Barıss Journey)

Yarıyıl Tatili (Semester Holiday)

The sequence of activities

The following sequence of activities supports pupils exploration of past changes in their local area. It follows four main steps.

1. Initiating

- exploring change within pupils' community; looking for areas of pupil interest.

2. Defining

- making sense of the information; change can be many things (good, bad, etc).
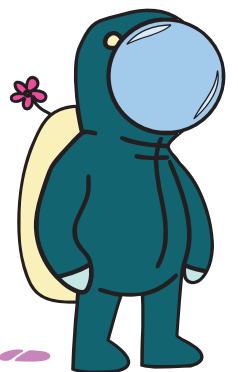
3. Making

- researching how local change relates to the climate crisis; interrogating evidence in relation to local change.

4. Recording

- recording initial findings; stories of past to present.

1. Initiating

- exploring change within pupils' community; looking for areas of pupil interest.

Activities 1 and 2, using primary and secondary sources, require quite a lot of work by pupils. We do not imagine that you will complete them all. You may, for example, want to complete Activity 1 and one or two ideas from Activity 2, before moving on to Activity 3 and the downloadable Examples of change prompts sheet (Annex 1).

Initiating. Activity 1. Investigating past changes in the local area – Interviewing elders

Here, pupils find out about local changes in the past by holding discussions and interviews with older members of the community (parents, grandparents, other elders).

"I really liked it when we were on Zoom with someone who had lived here for a long time" – **Year 4 pupil**
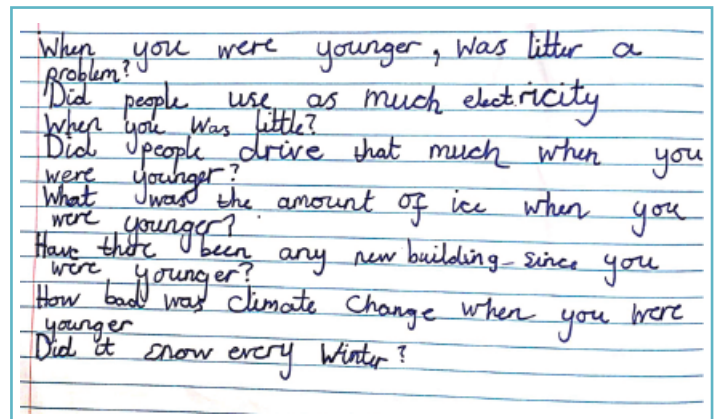
1. Pupils might be able to talk to older relatives in person if they still live in the area, or via Zoom, Skype etc if not. Does the school have a partnership with a retirement home or sheltered accommodation? Perhaps a University of the Third Age (U3A) group might be interested in supporting the project by being interviewed? Remember that older members of the community may not all be elderly: even relatively young parents, teachers or teaching assistants will have witnessed changes since they were young; so too will pupils themselves!

2. Interviews can be carried out by asking direct questions relating to the changes that might be expected by pupils e.g. "do you think more people have cars nowadays?", "have you noticed that local forests have disappeared / been planted since you were young?" or "how did your parents get milk when you were young?"

3. It will be helpful for pupils to practice and develop their interviewing skills before carrying out 'live interviews'.

4. This practice can include questioning techniques. For example, it is usually better to start with one or two simple closed questions (e.g. name, how long the person has known this place), but then to ask more indirect, non-leading questions. This takes longer but is more satisfying. Examples of such questions are, "what do you remember about your life when you were young?", "how did you get to school?", "what changes have you noticed in this area since you were young?" or "do winters seem to be the same as when you were young?" What other good questions can pupils think of?

5. Practice interviews can be carried out in pairs, with partners evaluating each other's questioning techniques.

6. Having practiced, pupils should now be ready to conduct 'live interviews'. They might want to record and/or evaluate some of these, too.

7. Another technique is for pupils to engage in longer, less structured, conversations with older members of the community, which are recorded and then examined for evidence of changes.

Interviewing elders - external links

Oral History Society:
https://www.ohs.org.uk/for-schools-main-page/

University of the Third Age:
https://www.u3a.org.uk

Pupils interview pop stars:
**https://www.bbc.co.uk/music/articles/b6d0b46b-342c-43ee-a13d-b3ac04b5439c**

Initiating. Activity 2. Investigating past changes in the local area using secondary sources.

In this activity, pupils investigate information from a source such as photographs, documents, past recorded interviews, maps and/or fieldwork.

Secondary sources might sometimes confirm, and at others challenge, what pupils' observations or interviews seem to be showing.

Activity 2a. Pupils start out by thinking about sources.

- Local records offices, museums and newspapers will often have collections of old photographs. Local museums or library archives may have recordings or transcriptions of interviews from oral history projects. Parents and grandparents may have albums of photographs or postcards. One of the pilot schools used a book that allowed them to compare historical images of the local town next to present-day ones. Images like these can be used alongside discussions or interviews as memory-joggers, prompting recollections or anecdotes.

- A range of modern and historical online maps and mapping tools are listed on page 8. Some (such as Digimap for Schools) allow users to merge past with present maps. Many families will have older maps of the local area (there might be some in the school stock cupboard!) Even maps as recent as 10 or 20 years old can reveal significant changes.

- What other sources of evidence related to change can pupils think of? How about paintings, objects and artefacts in museums and other public buildings (maybe even in the school itself)? Census records show interesting changes regarding occupations and social mobility. Many areas used to have trade directories listing local people and their jobs. What else can be added to this list?
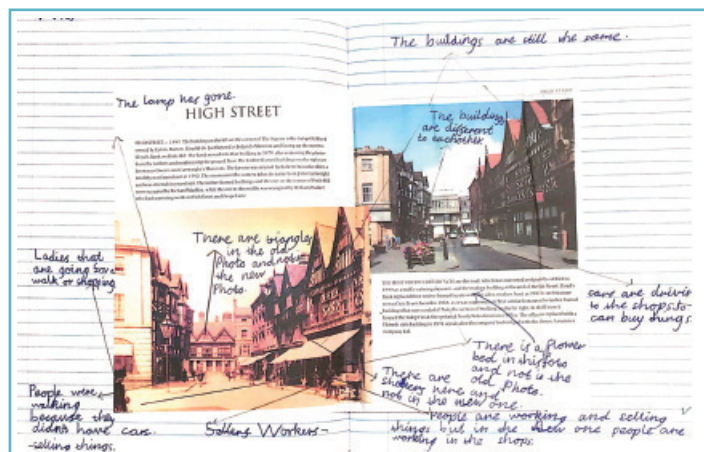

"I enjoyed learning about how Shrewsbury was in 1966 and how it is now" – Year 4/5 child.

Activity 2b. Pupils can now develop questions and ideas about the source material they have decided to investigate. For example: images and artefacts, maps and/or fieldwork.

You may decide to interrogate images or artefacts.

- We offer some prompt questions in the box on page 7 for teachers to use with pupils.

- Pupils could create a timeline on which they place their sources. What do they tell us about change, including climate change, in the past? Does change always happen in the same way or at the same speed? Where might the timeline travel next?

- The Development Compass Rose is a useful framework for generating questions about images. It can be used to ask questions about the Natural/ environmental, Social/cultural, Economic and Political (Who decides?) dimensions of any place or situation. An image or artefact from the past is placed in the centre of a large sheet of paper and pupils ask questions about it, grouped around the four headings. **(https://www.tidegloballearning.net/sites/default/files/uploads/compass%20rose%20text.pdf)**
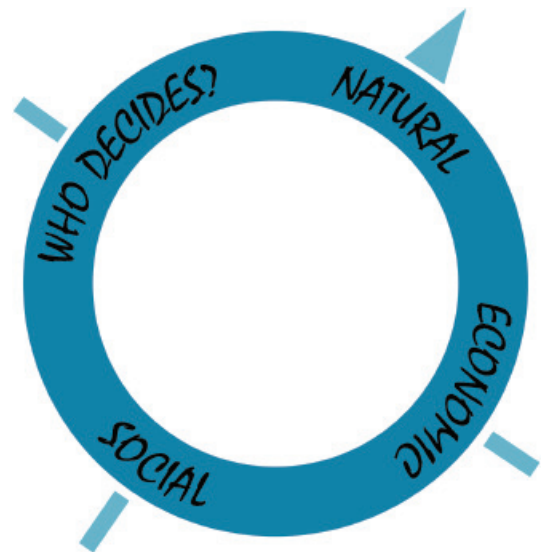
© Tide - global learning
(www.tidegloballearning.net).

- Because it uses generic headings that apply to many situations, the Development Compass Rose is also really useful for highlighting commonalities across time. Replace the image or artefact from the past with a comparable item from the present day (e.g. an image of the same place). Which of the questions from the past still apply? What has changed and why might that be?

- It may also be useful to look at the link to 'Talking about photographs' activities on page 8.

Some prompt questions about photos and images

- Are there any clues that this photo was taken a long time ago?
- Who might these people be?
- What are they doing?
- Do they look like they might be poor or wealthy?
- What makes you think that?
- Where was this photo taken?
- Would it be easy to find this place now?
- Does this picture show anything that would be different now?

"There were more places to walk in the past, they are now full of houses" – Year 4 child.

Alternatively, pupils could use modern and historical maps.

- Comparing maps of the past with more recent ones can tell us a lot about how a place has changed. Physical and human features such as green spaces, woodland or local businesses can be compared with the past: new roads may have appeared, settlements may have grown etc. There may have been some improvements as well as problems that have come with these changes: cycle paths or windfarms, for example.

- Maps can be used to explore geographical themes such as land use, land ownership, settlement and change and to connect these to local history studies and concepts of continuity and change over time.

- Looking ahead (to work in Part 3 – Future): if pupils were to create a map of their area in 20 years' time, what would they like it to look like? What story would they tell about this map and the changes that brought it about? Is this something they could include in their story?

As a third option, fieldwork could be used to supplement secondary sources.

- Having looked at local maps or modern/historical images, pupils carry out local fieldwork, comparing their direct observations with what other sources have told them. Evidence that they might observe includes the built environment: house or building type, signage, plaques or date marks. It could also include land use: built-up areas, shopping centres, parks, fields, roads, woodland, bus stops, cycle tracks etc.

- Pupils could take photos or make field sketches of evidence of change: marking the location of their images onto print-outs or sketch maps. These can be used to create a whole class map back in school. What do pupils think this evidence tells them about change in the past, climate change and the environment?

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Using secondary sources – external links

ArcGIS: a variety of digital maps can be read or created using this pay-for mapping resource.
www.arcgis.com

Bing Maps allow you to toggle between current aerial and map views, including OS formats. You can select features to show and add grid lines.

British Newspaper Archive: **https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/content/free_access**

DEFRA Magic Map looks at how land is used in England and who owns it today. It is fairly complex/technical: **https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx**

The Development Compass Rose:
https://www.tidegloballearning.net/sites/default/files/uploads/compass%20rose%20text.pdf

Digimap for Schools is a pay-for resource, with online printable modern and historical OS maps of the UK (and high-quality world maps) at a wide range of scales. Online tools allow you to measure, mark-up and upload data to your maps. It is supported by a wide range of free teaching resources. **https://digimapforschools.edina.ac.uk/**

Find My Past: British newspapers. This includes a free search facility, where you can find dozens of newspaper articles for a particular town or country, and even narrow the search down to what was happening on a particular date (e.g. 30 April in Shrewsbury): **https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers**

Google Maps allow you to toggle between current aerial and map views, view images of the places you are looking at and to use Street View to put yourself into the landscape (if it is on or near a public road). They label and link to local shops and businesses. **https://www.google.co.uk/maps/**

Ordnance Survey historical maps: **http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/index.html**

Ordnance Survey maps allow you to add in features such as green spaces, and to toggle between aerial and map views of a place. A pay-for facility lets you access 3D aerial views! **https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk**

Talking about photographs: **https://www.tidegloballearning.net/primary-early-years/talking-about-photographs**

Met office – historic station data. The website allows you to select a weather station near to your area and see the warmest and coldest temperatures, rainfall and sunshine figures each month, for the past 70 to 170 years (some stations are older than others!) Historic data can then be compared with more recent figures or the pupils's own readings: **https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/historic-station-data**

UK climate extremes. This allows pupils to find out the hottest, coldest, wettest, windiest and sunniest days on record … and where this happened.
https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-climate-extremes

An England land ownership map is being created, with interesting supporting blogs (including about what has changed over time, and what has stayed the same) at: **http://map.whoownsengland.org/**

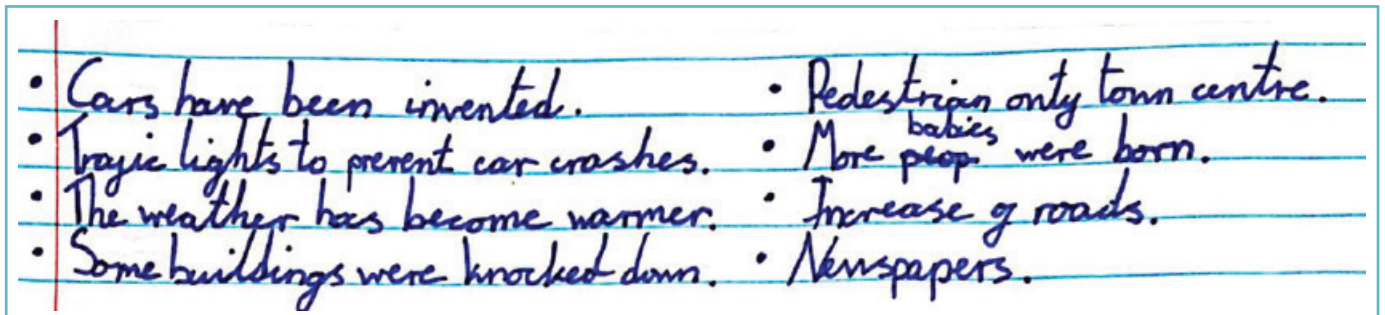**Initiating. Activity 3. Pupils select examples of changes in the past.**

Pupils consider and review examples of stories of the kind of past changes that they have (or might) come across in their own area. They select ones that they wish to investigate further.

1. Working in pairs or small groups, pupils look at examples of change. We provide examples/prompts as a supporting resource (Annex 1).

2. Which examples are most familiar? Pupils share ideas with another pair or small group.

3. Whole class discussion. Which examples of change come up most often? Can we think of particular examples from the local area e.g. a specific place, person or moment?

4. Pupils select a specific example that they wish to investigate further.

Wherever they live, it is important that pupils are able to identify with the changes and relate them to their own lives. This is easiest if the changes are observed within or near their own community e.g. local forests established or cut down in a rural area; the introduction of a new tram system in a city. However, some of the changes that pupils investigate might also be regional, national or global, e.g. an increase in international travel.

"We flood a lot, so they really understood that"
– Year 4 teacher.

- Cars have been invented.
- Traffic lights to prevent car crashes.
- The weather has become warmer.
- Some buildings were knocked down.
- Pedestrian only town centre.
- More babies people were born.
- Increase of roads.
- Newspapers.

2. Defining

- making sense of the information; change can be many things (good, bad, etc).

Defining. Activity 1. Evaluating change example (Washing line activity)

This activity explores how local changes in the past may have impacted on climate change. It can be done so that choices are not ascribed to individual pupils.

Materials. Washing line or strong string, A4 or A5 paper, clothes pegs, A4 signs on cardboard.

1. The examples of change that pupils have selected are listed on a board or flip-chart. These can be supplemented with other examples gathered from interviews with older members of the community and/or secondary sources.

2. Each pupil copies their example of change onto an A4 or A5 sheet in large writing. If there are more changes than there are pupils in the class, some may write out more than one. The paper can be cut in the shape of T-shirts, underpants, socks etc. to reinforce the washing line theme.

3. Meanwhile, stretch a piece of string or a washing line across the classroom (or if outside, between two trees). Put a sign at one end, saying 'no impact on changing the climate' and at the other end a sign 'big impact on changing the climate.'

4. In groups of three, pupils decide where on the line to peg their examples of change.

5. When all the sheets are placed on the line, pupils are given the opportunity to move their examples in relation to others.

The whole class discusses each example of change and how it might have an impact on climate change. Some of the changes might be deemed as having helped reduce climate change (e.g. internet use might have had a positive effect on reducing the need for travel or printing out books, but on the other hand might have led to an increase in demand for electronic items and electricity). Such examples could be explored further through a 'consequences' activity. This is downloadable as a supporting resource (Annex 2).

Tip Box

Some pupils might not be able to decide where to place examples as this is not always easy. However, the process that pupils use in order to arrive at their decision is at this stage as important as whether their decision is a 'correct' one. Especially if you are working with younger pupils, you might like to include a 'don't know' option.

This activity is a good opportunity for initiating conversations about what we mean by changing the climate and offers the potential to address content questions and misconceptions. It can then lead to an opportunity for pupil-led research, before the class returns to the washing line a second time. This could, therefore, also be a quick way to roughly assess ongoing levels of pupil knowledge.

If pupils appear clear about the basics, then this is a good point to invite some more nuanced thinking about change. For example, cars have undoubtedly been useful in many ways, but we are now conscious that the number of combustion engines is bad for the climate. Is the real issue therefore more about fuel choices than cars?

Considering the scale of impact (a little, big etc.) will be useful to revisit with pupils when it comes to solutions. It is a question that becomes critical in extending the range of possibilities beyond local and personal action and towards considering questions about system change.

Defining. Activity 2. **Perspectives on change.**

This activity looks at the issues from a range of different people's perspectives. There are six downloadable role cards available as a supporting resource (Annex 3).

- **A farmer - Bhupinder**

- **A taxi driver - Zoltan**

- **A shopkeeper - Meena**

- **A retired person - Roisin**

- **A parent with two toddlers at home – Owen**

- **A conservationist – Hiromi**

1. The whole class identifies three examples of change that have come up frequently in discussions so far.

2. Pupils get into six groups, and each group is allocated one role card.

3. Each group reads/listens to the role card carefully. They clarify anything they are not quite sure of, including any unfamiliar words or ideas.

4. Taking each of the three change examples in turn, pupils think about what it means for the person on their role card.

5. How might they see that change? Positively, negatively or somewhere in the middle? Why might that be? How could we find out?

6. Taking each of the three change examples in turn, a second washing-line (or similar sequencing) activity takes place. This time the statements are 'positive for me' at one end and 'negative for me' at the other.

7. Each group then completes the washing line activity for the person on their role card.

8. Each group considers, did we think that this person would see the change differently from how we did as a class? Why might that be?

9. Each table presents its ideas to the other groups.

10. Class discussion, noted on a whiteboard or flipchart. How did the different people's views differ from each other? Where were they similar? Why do we think that might be? How could we find out if our ideas are right?


Extension activity 1.

Data presentation (link to Maths, Computing). How could we present the data on how we think different people would view these changes as graphs/charts? What ways of doing this would allow us to see the similarities and differences most clearly?

Maybe this could lead on to a 'talking graphs' or 'living graphs' activity? There is an example of a 'talking graph' under the heading 'Talking Information' at: https://www.tidegloballearning.net/primary-early-years/climate-change-local-and-global-enquiry-approach-feature-article

Extension activity 2.

Taking this further, invite pupils to compare their ideas about 'good/bad for me' with 'positive/negative impact on the climate crisis.' Rather than using a straight line, this would require an x and y axis. Presenting ideas in this way could be used to initiate a discussion about how we consider social or economic inclusion and justice issues in the light of the climate crisis.

Good for me

Bad for me

Negative impact on climate crisis

Positive impact on climate crisis
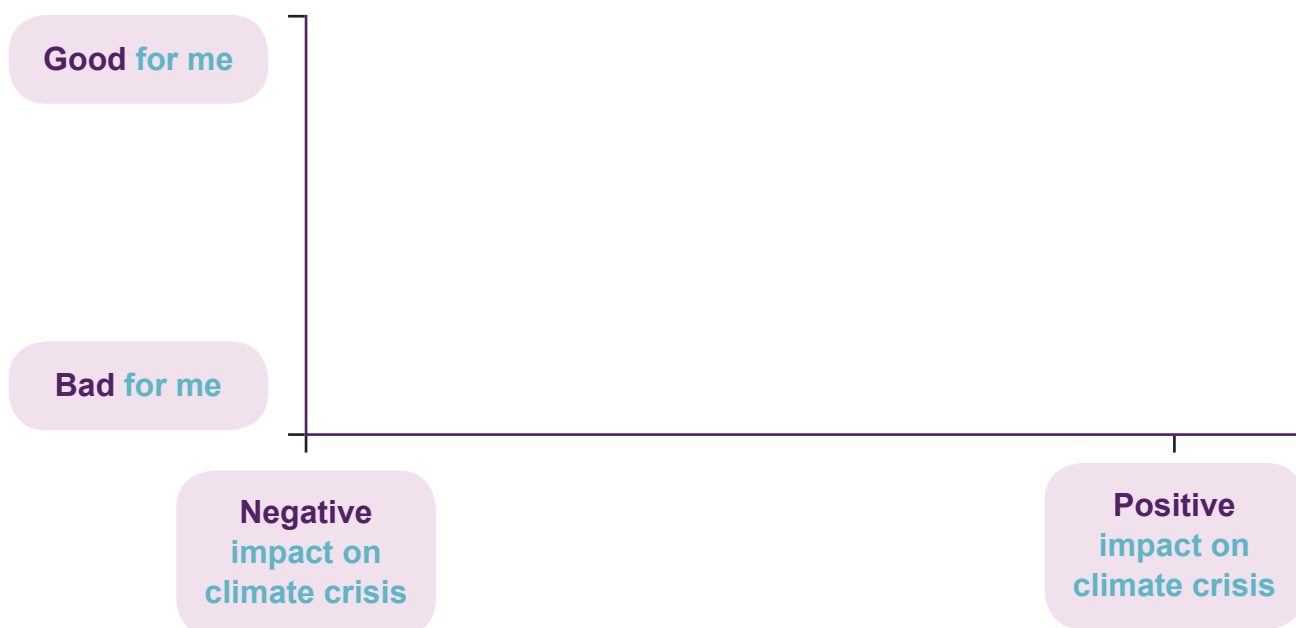
3. Making

- researching how local change relates to climate change; interrogating evidence in relation to local change.

Making. Activity 1.

In this activity, pupils interrogate evidence of local change through testing their selected example of change (see Initiating 3, above).

1. Taking their example of change, pupils consider: is this change related to climate change? (Yes/No/Maybe/Don't know).

2. What would they need to find out to reach an answer? Can they devise a test? What reliable online and offline sources might there be (e.g. FAQ sites in the box)?
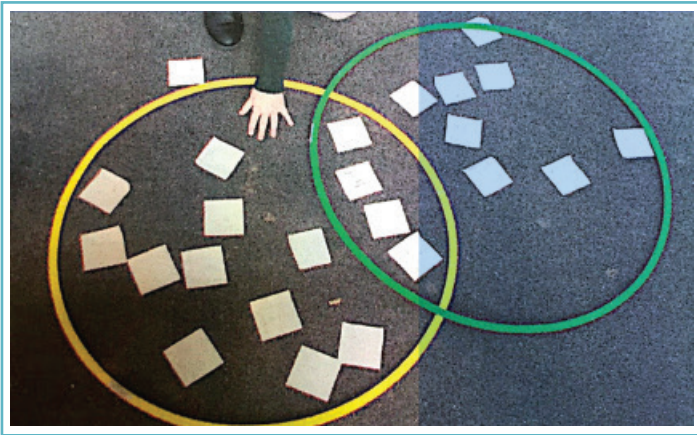
Frequently asked questions about the climate crisis: some online resources

We think these are particularly useful for teachers. The first two examples could be used by more confident pupils.

NASA (quite accessible):
https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/

The Nature Conservancy (quite accessible):
https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/climate-change-frequently-asked-questions/

Climate Central (fairly accessible, but with longer answers):
https://www.climatecentral.org/library/faqs

EESI (with longer answers but some useful diagrams)
https://www.eesi.org/climate-change-FAQ

IPCC (more technical but very authoritative)
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2020/05/WGI_AR5_FAQ_EN.pdf

> Cars have been invented and added to carbon emissions.

> Pedestrian only town centres reduce traffic jams and carbon emissions.

> The weather has become warmer and there are more floods.

4. Recording

- recording initial findings; story of past to present.

1. Ask the pupils if there are things they have done which will be useful for their digital story. Note some initial ideas.

2. As an in-class sharing at the end of Part 1, groups of pupils could present findings to the rest of the class about their examples of change and then use a third washing-line activity to show how climate change could have influenced the changes. This time, the signs are: *'Definitely caused by the climate crisis', 'the climate crisis has probably not caused this'* and (somewhere in between) *'the climate crisis may have contributed to this'*.

The climate crisis has probably not caused this.

Definitely caused by the climate crisis.

Supporting Resources in the Annexes

These can be found below or from the website here - **www.changethestory.eu/uk/learning-resources**.

- Annex 1: Examples of change prompts

- Annex 2: Consequences activity and three related images:

    - Consequences activity - composting

    - Consequences activity - fewer trees and woodlands

    - Consequences activity - more cars

- Annex 3: Role cards

Annex 1: Change the Story. Examples of local change – prompts.

The following are typical examples of past and present climate change directly affecting local communities. You might find these useful as prompts for pupils. Please feel free to add more examples (or to invite the children to do so).

Local changes in the past (these might be recalled for example by older members of the community: these could also be supplemented by secondary sources).

- More people have cars
- Fewer trees
- More factories
- People driving to big supermarkets
- Local small shops closing
- More variety in the shops
- Milk no longer coming from local farms
- More people working further away
- People have more TVs and other electronic goods
- Mobile phones (and masts) but fewer landlines
- Farmers using tractors instead of horses
- More intensive farming

- Summers were warmer in the past
- Better houses
- Indoor toilets
- Central heating in homes
- People using the internet
- More people travelling abroad on holiday

Please feel free to add more examples

Recent changes that might be a result of climate crisis

- More floods
- More trees dying
- Wetter winters
- Less snow
- Warmer winters
- Wetter summers
- Drier hotter summers
- Farmers having to change crops that they grow
- More insect pests
- Some plants flowering earlier

- Fewer bees
- Streams drying up
- Fewer insects on windscreens
- Hosepipe bans in summer

Please feel free to add more examples

Local examples of ways in which people are doing something about climate crisis

- Farmer putting up a wind generator
- Local homeowner putting solar panels on their roof
- Local company making wind generators
- Farmer with a bio-digestion system
- Builder constructing houses with extra insulation
- A family growing its own food on an allotment
- A local Cycle Repair Shop
- Someone who uses an electric bike instead of using their car
- Someone with an electric car
- Someone who only uses public transport
- People planting trees

- The school has an energy monitoring scheme
- Smart metering
- School with Ashden or Eco Schools Award
- An orchard or tree-planting project
- Making bug hotels
- Creating a wild area in school
- Conserving hedgerows and verges
- Planting willows near a river or stream

Please feel free to add more examples

Annex 2: Change the Story.

Consequences Activity

This activity is not intended to prove cause and effect. It is designed to allow pupils to explore possible consequences of changes that have occurred in their local environment. It could also be used to explore the possible consequences of actions that the pupils think might help the environment.

This is best carried out as an activity for small groups of 3-6 pupils, though an initial example could be worked through by the whole class so that all understand the process.

Materials

100+ small pieces of card (maybe 5cm x 7cm. You could use the reverse of out-of-date business cards, where an email address or phone number has changed).

Pencils or coloured felt pens.

Activity

1. Start with one of the changes that have occurred in the local community or wider environment. Each group could explore a different change.
2. This change can be written on a small piece of card.
3. Then by discussion within the group, a direct consequence of this change might be identified and written on a card.
4. What in turn might this consequence lead to? Write it on a card.
5. There may be several different consequences so the chain of consequences can branch.
6. When a chain of consequences leads to a logical end, the group can return to the original change and think of other possible consequences. Each possible consequence could be pursued by a pair of pupils and the cards written and laid out in sequence.
7. Working in pairs or threes allows discussion, which is the main purpose of the exercise rather than proving a cause and effect. Although a degree of challenge and rigour is helpful, pupils should feel encouraged and supported rather than have their suggestions rejected.
8. At the end of the activity, if time permits, each consequence could be rated with a coloured dot e.g. Green = Very likely. Yellow = Possible. Red = possible but unlikely.
9. Make a record of the exercise by taking photographs of the cards laid out (see examples 1-3 below) or glue them in sequence on a large piece of paper.

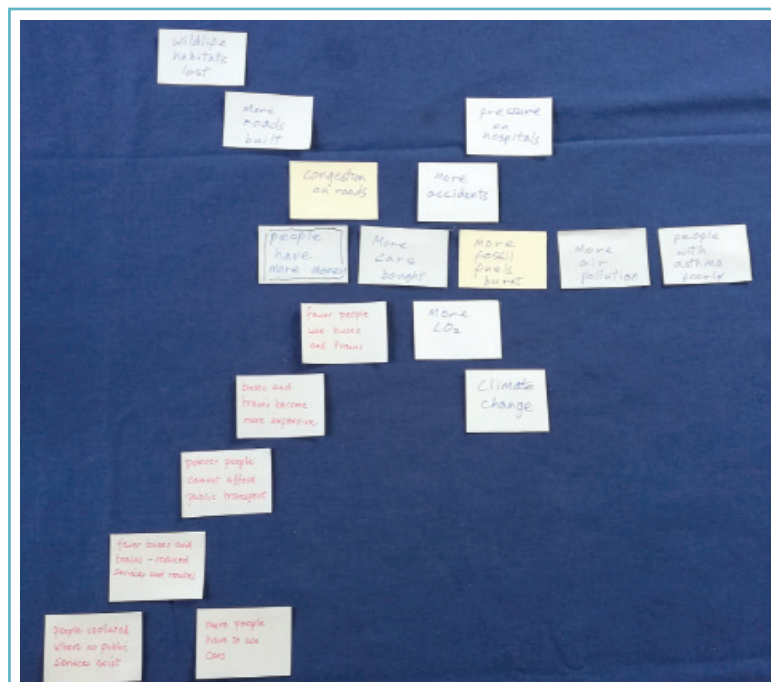1. Consequences activity – composting
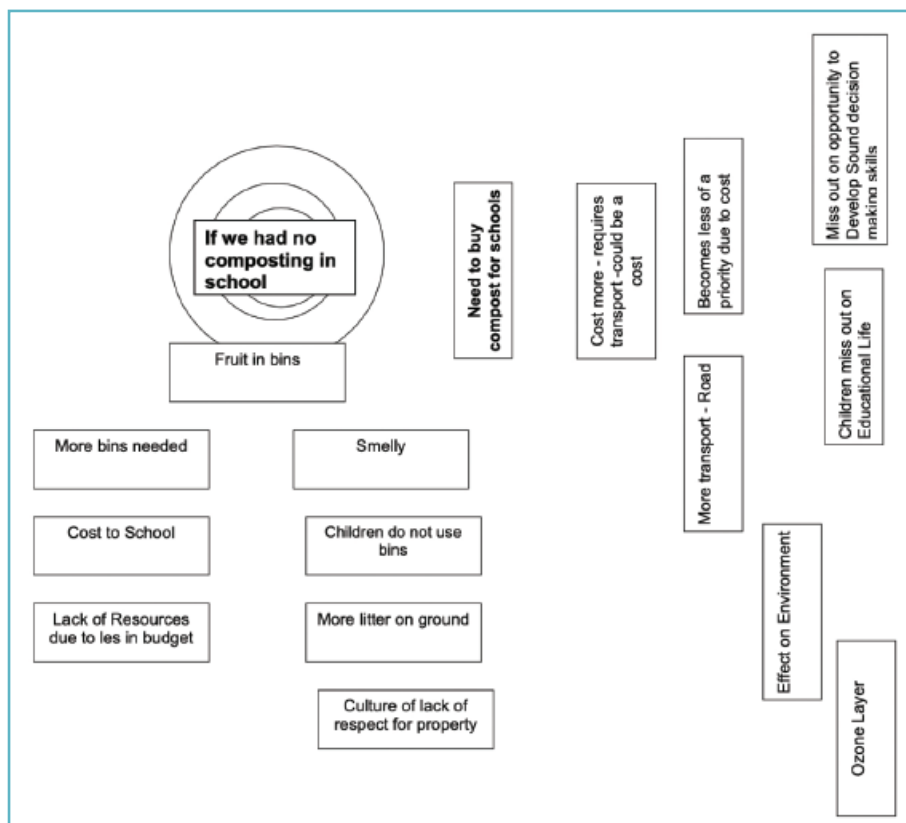
2. Consequences activity – fewer trees and woodlands
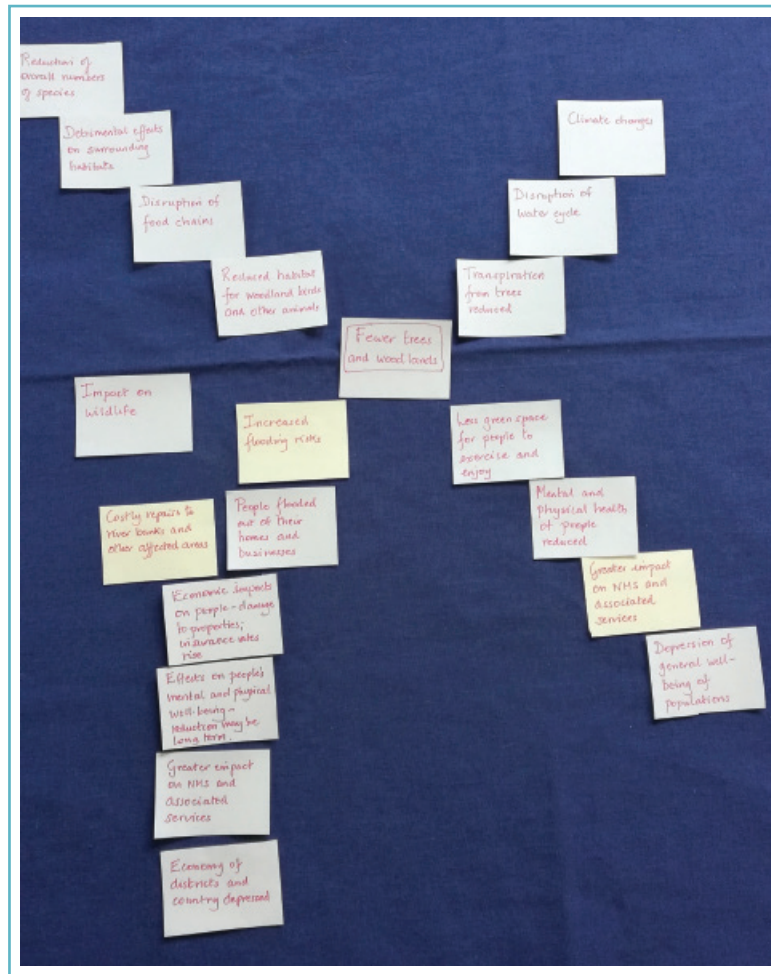
3. Consequences activity – more cars

Annex 3: The Role Cards

A farmer – Bhupinder

I grow asparagus in the Vale of Evesham. The local micro-climate is perfect for market gardening and our produce is popular all over the country. Last year, we had a very hot and dry early summer: much more so than usual. We had to make sure that the plants were well-watered because we couldn't rely on the rain to do it for us. This was more expensive for us, but we had to do it if we were to get a good crop. Then, in the spring, we had heavy downpours that caused flooding in Evesham and some of the local villages. The rain saturated our fields but our crop was OK this time. My little business supports a dozen families, some of whom we bring to work by minibus from Birmingham and Dudley. Some of my neighbours' farms use pickers from Romania, Bulgaria and beyond, though they are not sure how that is going to work out, now that we have left the European Union.

A taxi driver – Zoltan

I live in Solihull, but my best business comes through Birmingham Airport. Some of the international travellers tip really well and every year I drive one boy all the way from the airport to his private school in Hertfordshire. His parents live in Hong Kong and they want him to have a good education in one of the UK's top schools. He and I have a good chat on the way down the motorway: we have got to know each other quite well over the years. I prefer that sort of trip to going into Birmingham itself. They have introduced a congestion charge for non-electric cars, which means I pay extra just to go into town. I might join one of those companies where the drivers work together, because they will rent you out a hybrid until you can afford your own. They're lovely, quiet cars and the customers like them, but they cost a lot for a person like me. I'd have to choose between buying a car or going to visit my family in Budapest, which I try to do at least once a year.

A shopkeeper – Meena

This shop is like the centre of the world: it's certainly the centre of *mine*. I work all hours and even weekends. People sometimes just pop in for a chat, don't even buy anything, but that's fine with me. We are a mile from the nearest supermarket and a lot of the people on this estate don't have their own cars, so there will always be business. My son brings in the deliveries every morning. He takes his van to the cash and carry at the industrial estate. He gets up even earlier than I do! We sell a bit of everything here: food, newspapers, cleaning stuff, petfood, sweets: we even have a little cash machine inside the shop. We don't have a lot of fresh stuff as it often goes to waste. Lately, I have noticed that a lot of people are buying those vegetable patties from Jamaica. I expect it's one of those fads and it will be something else that they're all mad about next year.

A retired person – Roisin

They say that the Irish built the railways. My late husband was a conductor on the trains and I worked in the ticket booth at Wolverhampton Station. His dad actually built the line. When we retired, we bought ourselves a little house on the edge of Shrewsbury. It's a quiet area, with regular buses to town, a green, a few shops and a primary school. We still have our post office, for now. There was talk about moving it into the supermarket down the road, but I don't like it there: lots of people, but nobody talks to you. They got me to sign a petition about it. You've got to do your bit, haven't you? I was born just after the Second War: people looked after each other in those days. Weekends, my daughter and her children come to visit. In the summer, we sit in the garden and have a cup of tea. She usually brings ginger cake and the children have a play. She drives over: I never did learn. When she's gone, I like to listen to the birds and watch the butterflies. There are more of them this year, I've noticed, which is nice.

A parent with two toddlers at home – Owen

I always wanted to be a Dad, so when my partner said she was expecting twins, it felt like the right thing to stop back with them and for her to carry on working. She's a ward sister and I was a care worker, so she always earned more anyway. A few of my mates teased me about it and I do get the occasional funny look, but I love spending time with Seren and Rhiannon, my two-year-old girls. My partner says it's because I'm just a big kid myself! My Nan says this bit of our lives will be over in the blink of an eye: they will be in school and I will be back at work before I know it. We're in a Staffordshire village and people here are dead friendly, though when the weather is wet, there's nowhere much you can go with a twin buggy and no car. The bus to Burton-on-Trent comes through twice a day, but it's a wrestle to get onto it, so usually we just stay local. When the weather is good, we mess about in the stream or go to playgroup and the park. Every day is slightly different.

A conservationist – Hiromi

I have always loved nature, so I did a biology degree and was very active in environmental groups at university in Coventry. When I finished uni, I went off to work with the local wildlife trust. It is great to have a job where you can work outdoors and feel you are making a real difference, whether it is helping children make bug hotels or finding out information about yet another planning application for new houses. In this job, you see the best of people and sometimes (I am afraid to say) you can see the worst as well. This part of the world is famous for its cars, but I would like it to be just as famous one day for being the 'green workshop of the world', making useful products that protect nature and get bought all over the world. I try to do my bit in my home life, too: I eat a plant-based diet, to keep my carbon footprint down, and unless the weather is truly awful I cycle to work.

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