

Earth Guardians Unit Plan

Ages: Year 3 and 4 (Age 8 – 10) Duration: 9 Weeks

| Lessons/ weeks | Learning experience | Teaching strategies | Resources |
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| Week 1: Exploring nature | <p>Activity 1: *Yarning Circle: In a natural space within the school, students engage in a yarning circle led by a local nature expert or member of the First Nations People. They discuss the plants and animals that inhabit the area, what they need to survive, what makes the area unique, stories connected to the area, and how it has evolved over time. Next, the students take a nature walk around the school grounds, observing and discussing the local environment.</p> <p>This experience provides the opportunity to connect with the land as they learn about unique plants and animals in the area, their survival needs, cultural stories, and the ecological changes that have occurred over time. This walk deepens their understanding of biodiversity (Links to Science), human impact (Geography) and historical transformation of the landscape (History)</p> <p>Reflection: Afterwards, each student collects one dry leaf from the ground and writes on it a key message from the yarning circle about caring for the natural environment. The teacher collects these for the following lesson.</p> <p>*What is a Yarning circle? A yarning circle is a traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander method of community gathering for sharing knowledge, stories, and building respectful relationships in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Participants sit in a circle, fostering a democratic dialogue where everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and be heard, focusing on collective strengths rather than problem-solving or criticism.</p> | Yarning circle Incursion - visiting expert Nature walk Outdoor learning Teacher-led discussion Written reflection | Class set of fine-point permanent markers |
| Week 2: Taking the Pledge as Earth Guardians | <p>Before the lesson: Teacher displays students' reflection leaves on the learning wall in the shape of a tree.</p> <p>Introduction - The Last Tree on Earth: Students enter the drama room to find a potted plant or small tree in the centre of the space. They collect their leaf from the learning wall and hold it as they form Drama Circle. The teacher leads a discussion of what the tree might symbolise or stand for, and asks them to imagine that it is the last tree on earth.</p> <p>Activity: Sharing Messages with the Last Tree: The teacher asks students to share the messages on their leaves with the last tree. They create a soundscape of thoughts aloud, beginning quietly as whispered popcorn-sharing and growing louder under the teacher's guidance to a crescendo.</p> <p>The teacher reveals that they, too, are holding a leaf - a</p> | Display of student work Drama Circle Pre-text Thoughts aloud: Popcorn sharing, Soundscape | Student leaves displayed on the learning wall Potted plant/small tree Teacher's leaf with message: <i>My human friends, after listening to your messages, and knowing you heard mine, I see you are the ones. I have a</i> |

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| | <p>message to the students in return from the last tree – and reads it aloud.</p> <p>Activity 2 - Earth Guardian Pledge: In groups of 3, students collaborate using movement and language to create an Earth Guardian Pledge, a solemn promise to the tree outlining their commitments. Groups are encouraged to end their pledge by laying their leaves at the base of the tree. Around the circle, each group presents their pledge and lays their leaves.</p> <p>Silent Reflection: As students leave the space, they circulate silently among the leaves reading and reflecting on others' messages.</p> | <p>Elbow partners/group work</p> <p>Silent reflection</p> | <p><i>special invitation for you. As the last tree on earth, I challenge you to become 'earth guardians', protectors of all living things present, teachers of wisdom from the past, bringers of hope to the future. Will you help me send a message to future generations about how to care for the nature we have left?</i></p> |
| <p>Week 3: The Past - Ancient Wisdom</p> | <p>Introduction: Students enter the drama room to find the edges of the space set up as a Gallery Walk containing books, stories, images, artefacts and poems reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections to Place and care for Country.</p> <p>Activity 1 - Travelling Through Time and Space: In Drama Circle, the teacher leads a discussion of how to begin their quest as Earth Guardians, what information is needed, how it could be gathered and how they could travel back through time and space to learn from ancient wisdom on how to care for the earth.</p> <p>Time Machine: Half the students use their bodies and voices to form a time machine around the other half who take on the role of Earth Guardian time travellers. They collaborate to set the Time and Place of their destination and arrive in the ancient past.</p> <p>Activity 2 - Gallery Walk: As Earth Guardians in their groups of 3, students explore the gallery and select an item that particularly interests them. They examine it for connections to Place and care for Country, and report back to the class in Drama Circle.</p> <p>Activity 3 - Modelling Soundscapes: Students are asked to consider what this Time and Place would have sounded like and how to reflect what they have learned in the form of a sound using their voice or body percussion. In a teacher-directed soundscape, with eyes closed, they perform their sounds to bring this ancient time and place to life. (Formative assessment)</p> <p>Written Reflection: Students each receive a Reflection</p> | <p>Drama Circle Gallery Walk</p> <p>Building a time machine/group work/ kinaesthetic responses</p> <p>Observation/ Questioning</p> <p>Soundscapes</p> <p>Written Reflection</p> | <p>Gallery Walk items can include: Picture books such as <i>Welcome to Country</i> by Aunty Joy Murphy and <i>Looking After Country with Fire</i> by Victor Steffensen</p> <p>Dreaming stories reflecting connections to Country</p> <p>Artworks reflecting connections to Country</p> <p>Poems such as <i>Mother Earth</i> by Nola Gregory</p> <p>Clapsticks and info card</p> <p>Class set of Reflection Worksheets and pens/pencils</p> |

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| | Worksheet. They reflect on what they have learned and record a key thought or wondering in the Past leaf on their worksheet. | | |
| Week 4: The Present - Survival of the Forest | <p>Introduction: Students enter the drama room to find the potted plant/tree in the centre of the space. They form a circle around it and discuss how to continue their quest as Earth Guardians. The teacher guides them in wondering how this tree became the last, what happened to the rest of the trees, who may have been involved, where this happened and when. They form their Time Machine (roles may be reversed this time to give students an opportunity to experience another perspective) to travel to the Time and Place (within the present day) of the trees' destruction.</p> <p>Activity 1 - Survival of the Forest: This game is similar to musical chairs. The teacher selects five students to play the trees and enrols the rest as Australian animals that rely on trees for survival (koalas, possums, owls, lizards, cockatoos, and bats). With the trees in frozen positions around the space with arms and legs outstretched like branches and roots, the animals move in character around the space. When the teacher calls 'habitat', the animals must find a tree to shelter in (each tree can hold four animals). Gradually and with discussion of what may be causing it (deforestation, fire, heatwave, drought), the trees are removed, and the animals find it harder and harder to find shelter. Students who are 'out' have become 'extinct'. In later rounds, they may become the habitat removalists and/or environmentalists who try to solve the problem by building nest boxes or planting more trees (these young saplings are smaller and must stand on their knees, sheltering only two animals). The game continues until only one tree and four animals remain.</p> <p>Activity 2 - Modelling Freeze Frames: During the game, the teacher takes a series of 3 'photos' (one of the beginning, middle and end) by calling 'snap' and miming holding a camera or phone. When 'snap' is called, students must freeze and remember their position and expression. After the game, the teacher and students look at their 'photos' of the dwindling forest by re-forming each freeze frame and moving between them in slow motion, ending with the final image of the final tree and animals. (Formative assessment)</p> <p>Written Reflection: Students reflect on their experience and record a key thought or wondering in the Present leaf on their Reflection Worksheet.</p> | Drama Circle Time Machine Game/Roleplay Freeze frames Written Reflection | Potted plant or small tree Students' Reflection Worksheets Class set of pens/pencils |
| Week 5: The Future - A World Without Trees | <p>Introduction: Students enter the drama room to find the potted tree in the centre of the space and form Drama Circle around it. The teacher reveals that they will be travelling through time and space one final time, this time to the future to investigate what a world without trees would be like.</p> <p>Activity 1 - A World Without Trees: Students form their time</p> | Freeze frames Reflection | Potted plant or small tree Poem on leaves, <i>A World Without Trees</i> (See resources) |

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| | <p>machine as in previous lessons, set the time and place, and arrive in 'the future' to find the floor scattered with leaves. There are 8 - 10 leaves (one per group, depending on student numbers), each containing two rhyming lines of the poem 'A World Without Trees'. The teacher invites each group of 3 Earth Guardians to collect a leaf and collaborate with the other groups to piece the poem-puzzle together by looking for clues as to the beginning, middle and end of the poem. Once in sequence, students read the poem aloud to the class.</p> <p>*Note: If time does not permit the puzzle activity, the leaves may be numbered to indicate the sequence of the poem.</p> <p>Activity 2 - Bringing the Future to Life: In a space of their own, groups use movement, sound, language and human context to bring their piece of the poem to life. They are encouraged to find sounds and images within the poem to focus on expressing. According to time available, the teacher scaffolds the following process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Find and circle 2/3 impactful sounds/images within the poem 2) Create a freeze frame to express each of these (students must change places and levels between each) 3) Create a soundscape for each freeze frame using voice and body percussion 4) Add the language of the poem as dialogue (students are encouraged to experiment with pitch, pace, pause, volume, silence, repetition/echo, unison/solo). <p>Activity 3 - Rolling Freeze Frame of the Future: Groups perform their pieces of the poem in succession around the space in the form of a rolling freeze frame.</p> <p>Written Reflection: Students reflect on their experience and record a key thought, wondering or hope about the future in the Future leaf on their Reflection Worksheet.</p> | | <p>section)</p> <p>Students' Reflection Worksheets Class set of pens/pencils</p> <p>Poetry Analysis Group Work</p> <p>Freeze Frames Soundscape Dialogue Performance Poetry</p> <p>Rolling Freeze Frame</p> <p>Written Reflection</p> |
| Weeks 6 - 8: Creating Sustainable Messages | <p>Introduction: In Drama Circle, in their Earth Guardian groups, students receive their completed Reflection Worksheets. The teacher explains that it is time to create their messages to the world as pledged in the first session.</p> <p>Activity 1: Earth Guardian Poems: In their groups, students collaborate using their reflections on the past, present and future of sustainability to create an original poem containing one line from each student. They write out their original poem on the back of their worksheets, adjusting as required to complete their message.</p> <p>Activity 2: Embodying Sustainable Messages: Students collaborate using movement, sound, language and human context to shape drama expressing their messages of sustainability to the world. They are encouraged to ensure their</p> | <p>Drama Circle</p> <p>Poetry Writing and Analysis Group Work</p> <p>Soundscape Dialogue</p> | <p>Students' Reflection Worksheets Class set of pens/pencils Assessment rubric</p> |

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| | <p>drama has a strong sense of Place and reflects the passing of Time. To guide their forming, the teacher scaffolds the following process and provides opportunities for feedback throughout:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Find and circle the impactful language within the poem – what sounds and images does the poem evoke? 2) Create a freeze frame to express each line of the poem (students are encouraged to change places and levels between each) 3) Create a soundscape for each freeze frame using voice and body percussion 4) Bring each freeze frame to life with 20 seconds of movement and sound, transitioning between them in slow motion 5) Add the language of the poem as dialogue. Consider who/how many will speak in each freeze frame and when (students are encouraged to experiment with pitch, pace, pause, volume, silence, repetition/echo, unison/solo) 6) Practise their embodied messages to create cohesion and flow. <p>Summative Assessment - Making and Creating. Students collaborate to create an original performance poem expressing messages of sustainability</p> | <p>Freeze Frames</p> <p>Soundscapes</p> <p>Performance Poetry Rehearsal</p> | |
| <p>Week 9: Performing Sustainable Messages</p> | <p>Delivering Sustainable Messages: In their Earth Guardian groups, students collaborate to perform their Sustainable Messages to the world (represented by their teacher and peers).</p> <p>Summative Assessment - Presenting and Performing: Students collaborate to present an original performance poem expressing messages of sustainability.</p> <p>Celebrating Learning: To celebrate their learning and end on a hopeful note, students engage in a final game of Survival of the Forest, suggesting and applying their own strategies to preserve the natural resources and increase their chances of survival into the future - a kinder, greener, brighter world.</p> <p>Reflection: In Drama Circle, students connect with their prior knowledge and new understanding using the I Used to Think... Now I Think routine.</p> | <p>Performing and Viewing Drama Game/Roleplay</p> <p>Reflection: I Used to Think... Now I Think</p> | <p>Assessment rubric</p> |