

Our Place in the World



Name _____

Class _____

Teaching sequence

Work through this resource material in the following sequence:

10 minutes

Tune In: Humans and nature

20 minutes

Find Out: Cultural perspectives

25 minutes

Take Action: Reconnection to nature

5 minutes

Reflection: Quiet moments

Learning intentions

Students will:

- understand the connection between humans and nature
- explore how different cultures view, explore and experience the environment.

Success criteria

Students can:

- explain human-nature interconnectedness with examples
- design an action plan to promote connection to nature.

Tune In: Humans and nature

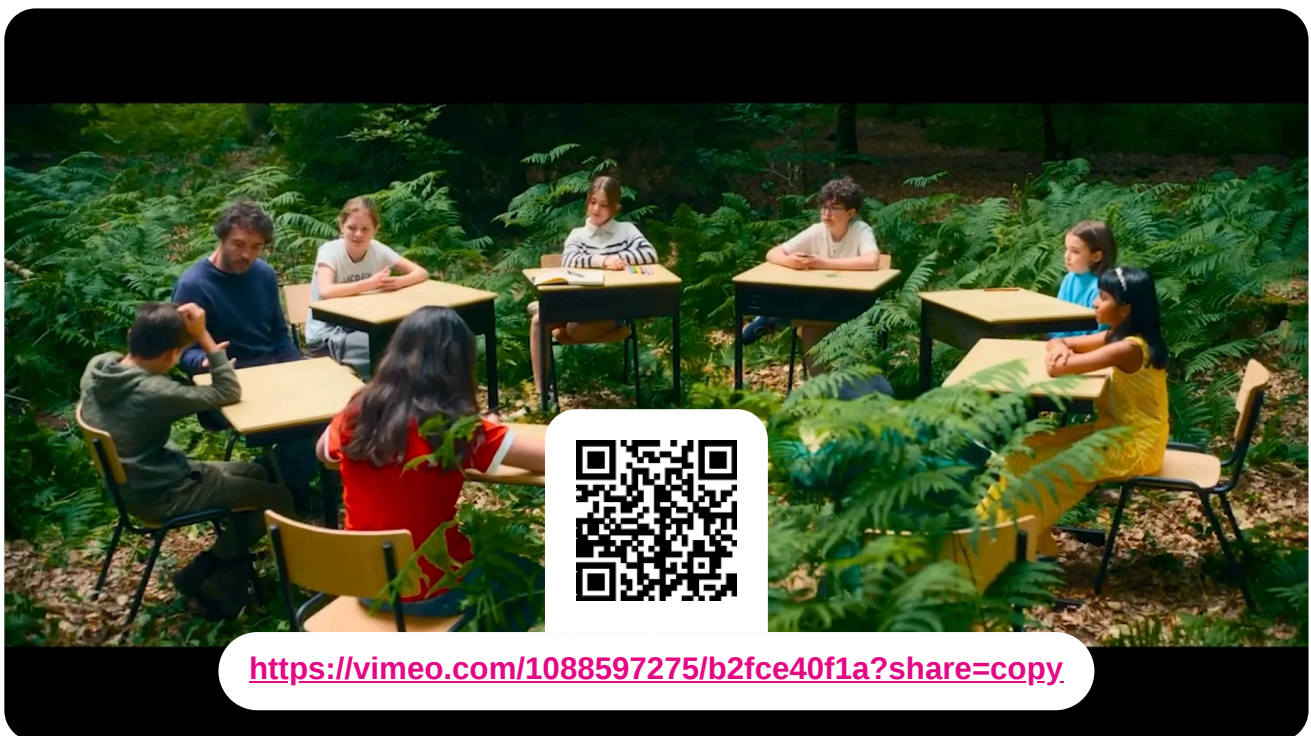
Preparation

For this activity, arrange the desks in four groups. At each group of desks, distribute a set of sticky notes and one of the [Station Cards](#).

Step 1

Explain to students that they will watch a video from *Future Council*. Outline to students that *Future Council* is a feature documentary that takes eight kids on the ultimate school excursion, a road trip across Europe to challenge powerful leaders and find solutions to our greatest ecological challenges.

As a class, watch the following video, which highlights the interconnection between humanity and nature.



[Future Council Clip](#) - (<https://vimeo.com/1088597275/b2fce40f1a?share=copy>)

Step 2

Explain to students that in the video from Future Council, the children are passionate about the connection between humans and nature. Begin by introducing the idea of “systems” (natural and human-made) and “interconnectedness”. Explain to students that humans have always been a part of nature, as outlined in the video. However, over time, our relationship with the natural world has shifted.

Step 3

Divide students into four evenly sized groups and provide them with sticky notes.

Set a timer for 2 minutes and ask each group to begin at a station. They will have 2 minutes at each station to participate in a sticky note brainstorming session. During this session, they must write their answers to the station questions on sticky notes and place them around the station card before moving to the next.

Station 1: Early human interactions with nature

Question: How did early humans rely on nature for survival, and how did they work in harmony with it?

Suggested responses: Food gathering, sustainable hunting, deep kin connection, storytelling, using natural resources for shelter and tools, seasonal cycles, controlled burning and traditional knowledge (for example, sustainable practices in First Nations communities).

Station 2: The role of science and culture

Question: How has science changed our understanding of nature, and how does culture shape our relationship with the environment?

Suggested responses: Scientific discoveries (for example, ecosystems and the water cycle), cultural practices such as seasonal harvesting and sustainable farming. The scientific revolution placed humans as separate and superior to nature.

Station 3: Industrialisation and technology

Question: How have industrialisation and technological advancement impacted our connection with nature?

Suggested responses: Deforestation, pollution, urbanisation, farming innovations, and renewable energy.

Station 4: Stewards to exploiters

Question: How have we shifted from being stewards of the earth to sometimes exploiting nature?

Suggested responses: Deforestation, overconsumption, pollution, and loss of biodiversity.

Step 4

Once each group has rotated through the stations, invite students to walk around the room to read the sticky notes. You may like to use the students' responses as well as the suggested responses below to discuss with students the change in the relationship between humans and nature over time.

Next, using the whiteboard, invite students to list the positives and negatives of industrialisation and technological advancements that have influenced our relationship with the environment.

Positives	Negatives
<p>Renewable energy: Clean energy sources like solar and wind reduce pollution, which still require extraction, but are a better alternative to burning fossil fuels.</p> <p>Efficient resource use: Technology helps us use resources more wisely in agriculture and manufacturing.</p> <p>Waste management: Better recycling and waste treatment processes reduce pollution.</p> <p>Environmental monitoring: Technology gives us the ability to track pollution and climate change, aiding in conservation efforts.</p> <p>Sustainable transport: Electric vehicles and better public transport reduce emissions.</p> <p>Cleaner manufacturing: Green technologies lower pollution in factories.</p>	<p>Resource depletion: Overuse of natural resources like water, minerals, and fossil fuels.</p> <p>Pollution: Industrial activities increase air, water, and soil pollution.</p> <p>Climate change: Fossil fuel use impacts global warming and extreme weather.</p> <p>Deforestation: Clearing land for industry destroys forests and habitats.</p> <p>Waste generation: More production leads to more waste, like plastics and e-waste.</p> <p>Biodiversity loss: Habitat destruction and pollution threaten species and ecosystems.</p> <p>Energy dependence: Reliance on fossil fuels continues to harm the environment.</p>

Step 5

Using the **Think, Pair and Share** thinking routine, invite the students to discuss how we can connect with our natural environment in more sustainable ways. Students may come up with examples such as:

- plant trees and create gardens in cities and communities to add more green spaces
- name species of trees in your school yard or backyard and investigate the unique aspects of these species
- name and identify birds you can hear at school or at home, and investigate the unique characteristics of these birds
- reduce waste by recycling, composting, and avoiding single-use plastics
- buy local and organic products to support farmers who use sustainable farming practices
- use renewable energy by switching to solar or wind power when possible
- protect wildlife by supporting projects that help conserve animals and their habitats
- teach others about sustainability and share eco-friendly habits with your friends and family.

Learning extension: To further their understanding, students may like to view Damon Gameau's [TED Talk](#), which further explores the relationship between humans and nature.

Find Out: Cultural perspectives

Step 1

Divide students into five groups. Each group will read a case study that represents a different cultural perspective on the relationship between humans and nature.

<p>Case study: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Australia)</p>	<p>First Nations communities in Australia have long held a deep connection to the land, viewing it as sacred and alive. The relationship with nature is based on respect, custodianship and sustainability, often guided by the concept of caring for Country. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Country is not considered to be separate, instead, Country is alive and is a part of each person (source).</p> <p>Key points: Humans are part of the natural world, and land is seen as an ancestor. Practices like controlled burning and sustainable hunting, storytelling and protection of sacred sites show a balance with nature.</p>
<p>Case study: Western Industrial Perspective (Europe & North America)</p>	<p>In many Western societies, industrialisation and technological advancements have shifted the view of humans as separate from nature (source). Nature is often seen as a resource to be used for economic growth and development, leading to practices that can harm the environment (for example, deforestation and pollution).</p> <p>Key points: Nature is something to be controlled or tamed. The industrial revolution and urbanisation have distanced humans from direct connection with nature.</p>
<p>Case study: Indigenous Amazonian Peoples from the Amazon Rainforest (South America)</p>	<p>Indigenous Amazonian peoples from the Amazon rainforest view the forest as a living entity, where humans, animals and plants all have interconnected roles. They practice sustainable farming and fishing methods and strongly believe that the forest provides everything needed for survival (source, source).</p> <p>Key points: Humans are stewards of the earth, and the forest is sacred. Practices like agroforestry and sustainable hunting reflect a deep respect for the ecosystem.</p>
<p>Case study: Buddhist</p>	<p>Buddhism teaches that all living things are interconnected and that humans are part of the cycle</p>

Perspectives (Asia)	<p>of nature. This perspective promotes harmony with nature through practices like mindfulness and compassion for all beings (source).</p> <p>Key points: Humans are seen as part of the cycle of nature and environmental harm is viewed as causing suffering. Sustainable living and respecting nature are part of spiritual practice.</p>
Case study: Zulu People (Southern Africa)	<p>The Zulu people of Southern Africa have a deep spiritual connection with the land, viewing it as sacred and inhabited by ancestral spirits. They believe in living in harmony with nature and practising sustainable farming and conservation to maintain balance between humans and the environment (source).</p> <p>Key points: The Zulu people consider the land as a living entity, often referring to it as “Mother Earth,” which provides resources for all beings. They use sustainable farming practices, such as crop rotation and allowing the soil to rest, to ensure long-term productivity. Sacred groves and natural sites are protected, as they are believed to house ancestral spirits. Cattle are essential to Zulu culture, and they practice rotational grazing to avoid overgrazing and maintain soil fertility.</p>

Step 2

Allow students time to read and discuss their case study. Encourage them to think about how the culture represented in their case study interacts with nature. Depending on the time, you may like to encourage students to do further research on their devices.

Step 3

Next, provide students with recycled magazines, newspapers, printouts and drawing materials. Their task is to create a perspective collage using images, words and symbols from the materials to visually express how the culture sees the connection (or separation) between humans and nature, and how humans interact with their environment. You may like to prompt students by asking:

- What feeling do you get from this perspective?
- What does it tell us about how people engage with nature?

Take Action: Connection to nature

Step 1

Once students have considered how humans and nature interact in different cultures, their task is to design a connection to nature action plan for their school. The aim of the plan is to build student awareness of their impact on their place (school) and their place's impact on them, and the wider community. Encourage students to reflect on their learnings from *Future Council* as well as the perspectives of different cultures.

For example:

- Form a Future Council in your school by connecting to the global platform of changemakers.
- Create a school garden to promote biodiversity and sustainable food production.
- Develop a mindfulness nature walking path in the school grounds that encourages students to observe nature.
- Design a waste reduction campaign that targets single-use plastics, organic waste or recycling materials.
- Hold a tree planting day to increase vegetation in the school grounds.
- Restore local biodiversity through native planting in their school environment.
- Plan a sustainable school supplies drive to collect and donate recycled or repurposed school supplies.

Students may like to work individually or in pairs to create their action plan.

Step 2

Provide students with a [Connection to Nature Action Plan](#) to complete. Encourage students to seek feedback from you and their peers during the process.

Step 3

Once completed, invite students to present their action plan to their peers and/or school leaders. In their brief presentation, ask students to share how they intend to implement their action plan.

Reflection: Quiet moments

Step 1

Invite students to sit quietly for one minute and reflect on their last experience in nature.

Step 2

Next, invite students to list three sustainable habits they currently practice (such as using a reusable drink bottle) and three new habits they'd like to try to strengthen their connection with nature.

These lessons have been created in partnership with

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