

Changing lives for more than 100 years

Key Stage Three My Impact Classroom Activity



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



Introduction

All of our actions have an impact on the environment around us. Growing the food we eat the production of all the stuff we own and the disposal of all the waste we produce. When you really think about it, everything has originally come from the earth and we depend upon our planet to provide us with everything we need to live our comfortable lives.

This activity looks at the impact people living in Northern Ireland have on the environment and gives pupils the opportunity to look at their own lives and the impact it has on the environment, both locally and globally.

Our View of Ourselves

People in Northern Ireland often think that we have very little collective impact on the local or global environment or that the issues are too big for us to tackle. There is also a high degree of apathy with people simply not caring about damage to our planet.

Some possible reasons for this are as follows.

- The political history of Northern Ireland diverted peoples' attention away from environmental issues and the idea of sustainability.
- The population of Northern Ireland is small compared to that of many other countries, so people assumed that our environmental impact was of little consequence. What difference can I make?
- Northern Ireland is a low wage economy and that means that people are more concerned about the pound in their pocket than about damage to the environment. With unemployment on the rise, people are increasingly concerned about their personal finances.
- A brief survey of the local newspapers over the past 40 years will show that people have been mainly interested in the Troubles, jobs, housing and roads.
- Many people in Northern Ireland have taken as fact the idea that we live in a green and pleasant land.
- Current media coverage of environmental stories tends to be very negative. This reinforces the idea that things are so bad, it's not worth bothering as there is nothing we can do.

Group Task 1

Read the statements above to your class.

Split them into small groups and ask them to discuss

1. If they agree with the statements.
2. If they can think of other reasons why people in Northern Ireland show relatively low levels of concern about environmental issues.

Following a period of discussion, each group should be given the opportunity to feedback their ideas to the rest of the class.

Group Task 2 - Environmental Impact Maps

This is a way for the young people to look at their own impact on the environment. They can work together in their groups, although it works equally well as a personal exercise.

Each map requires a large sheet of paper. They write their names in the centre of the sheet. Around their names ask them to list all the different ways their actions and activities have a negative impact on the environment.

If they require help, these signposts might be helpful:

At home and school

Transport

Holidays

Recreation

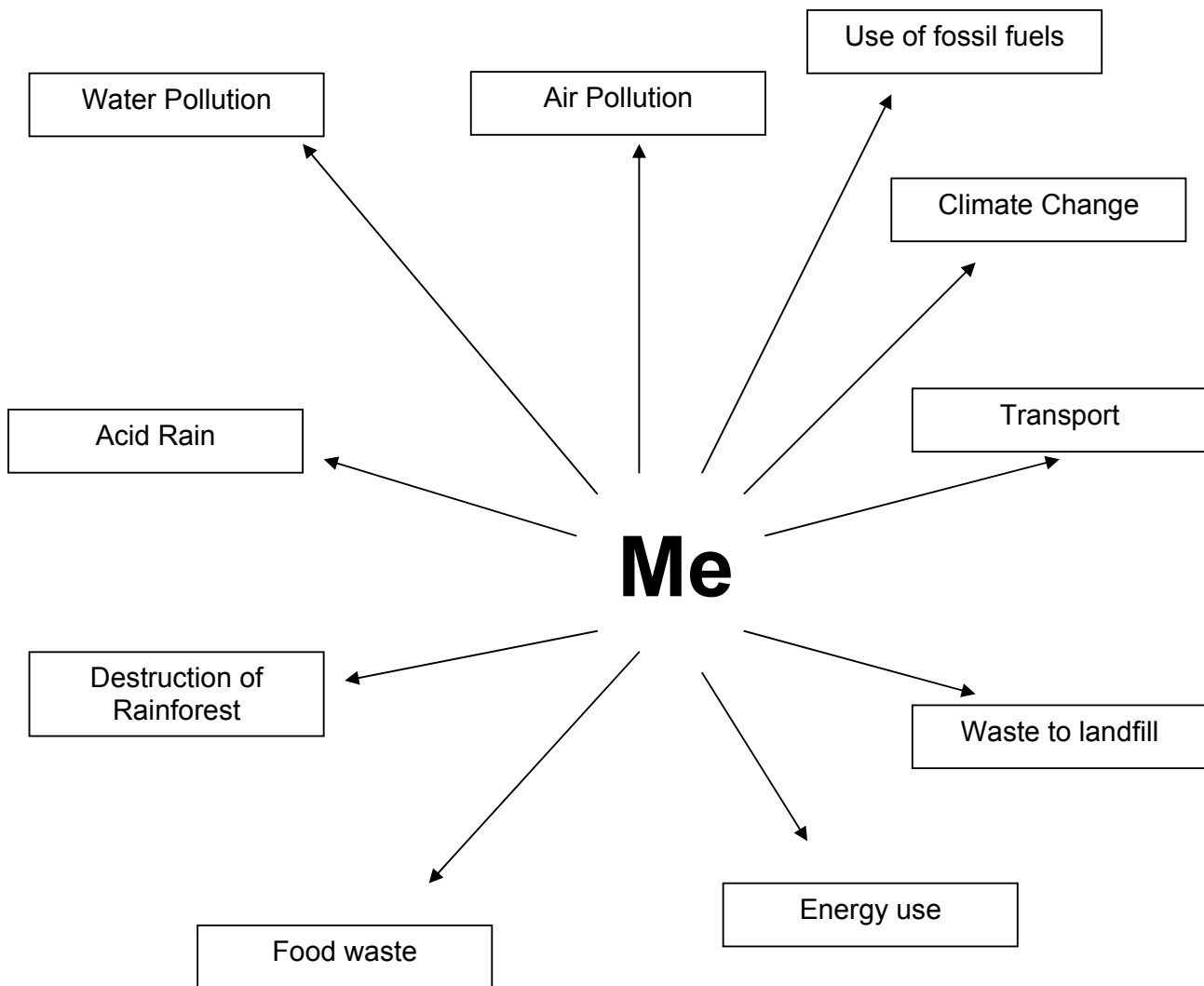
Food

Shopping

An example is show below.

After the exercise, each group should be given the opportunity to examine and discuss each of the other group's webs.

Example Environmental Impact Map



Environmentally Unsustainable

The web above along with those produced by the pupils show how we all have a wide range of negative impacts upon the environment. The same can be said for everyone living a similar lifestyle to us. This should be explained to the class along with the fact that if everyone in the world lived as we do, we would need at least three planets. If everyone lived as the average person in the United States does, we would need over seven planets!

As we have only the one earth, how we live in Northern Ireland is not universally applicable or environmentally sustainable.

E. F. Schumacher, who wrote a very influential book on the environment called, *Small is Beautiful* (1973) said:

“Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle he would find himself on the losing side.”

Read this quote to the class and ask them to discuss the following:

1. One of the things Schumacher is saying is that humans are as much a part of the natural world as the forests, rivers and the sky. As the natural world sustains us, if we harm it, we harm ourselves at the same time.

Do they agree with this statement? Why?

2. Our dependency on sophisticated technology makes it easy for us to forget how everything we do, every single moment of our lives, depends on nature, on having a healthy environment; the air we breathe, food we eat, water we drink. One reason why we trash our environment is because we don't make this connection between nature and ourselves.

Do they agree with this statement? Why?

Group Task 3 - Dependency on Nature

This task enables pupils to link their daily activities to the natural world.

Each group requires a sheet of paper, divided into two columns.

In the first column ask them to list ten things they do throughout the day, spaced out down the length of the page, starting from when they get up in the morning.

Once this is completed, ask them to think of ways each activity links to the natural world.

The following is a detailed example.

Activity:

Getting out of bed

Links to Natural World:

- The energy to get out of bed came from the food eaten day before.
- Food required soil, air, sun and water to grow.
- Transportation of food required oil.

- Cooking required electricity or gas.
- Processing, washing and packing of breakfast required energy and materials
- Raw materials for the packaging originally from nature e.g. wood for paper, oil for plastics etc.

Ask each group to feedback some of their activities and the links they made to the rest of the class.

Conclusion/Summary

At the end of the session, ask the pupils to discuss their opinions on the issues raised during the three tasks.

- Do they think there is a link between humans and the world around us?
- Are they concerned about the damage we are causing to the natural world?
- Has this made them think about their own lifestyles and the impact it has on the environment?
- What could be done to make the people of Northern Ireland more concerned about environmental degradation?