

Rachel's life is in a hole

A literacy activity addressing key elements of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) while demonstrating how lack of access to water impacts on people's lives in poor countries

Relevant elements of the Year 4 NLS Teaching Programme

NLS reference: Year 4 term 3 Non-Fiction

reading comprehension:

- 20: to summarise a sentence or paragraph by identifying the most important elements and rewording them in a limited number of words

writing composition:

- 24: to summarise in writing the key ideas from a paragraph or chapter

Global citizenship aims of the shared text reading and writing activity

- ✓ To enable children to find, select and present available evidence
- ✓ To develop children's understanding of the causes and effects of inequality and social injustice
- ✓ To raise awareness of the value of certain essential resources in promoting health and quality of life
- ✓ To understand the differences and similarities between people; to appreciate our common humanity
- ✓ To encourage empathy towards others globally
- ✓ To foster a sense of personal indignation at social injustice

Many of these aims are based on the Oxfam Curriculum for Global Citizenship, available from Oxfam Education, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ



Water Aid, the UK development charity working to help communities in Africa and Asia provide themselves with a safe water supply close to home, produce WaterLiterate and WaterNumerate, resources for the KS2 literacy and numeracy hour

Suggested lesson structure

The aim of this activity is to focus on summarising paragraphs of a non-fiction text and writing a summary which clearly identifies key ideas and messages. It may be preferable to complete the tasks over two lessons.

Reading comprehension: shared, whole class

Rachel's story should be read with the class to enable discussion on the key themes, ideas and messages of the story.

Before beginning the summarising activity, a useful whole class activity would be for the teacher to write up on the board/flip chart two lists of contrasting bullet points based on children's observations and comments:

- how only having access to dirty unsafe water far from home affects Rachel's life;
- how having clean safe water near her home would change Rachel's life. (Use children's own experience of immediate access to clean water at home and at school when considering this)

This will provide a good starting point for group or paired work involving summarising. It provides an opportunity for the teacher to demonstrate techniques for summarising in a few words the key themes, messages and ideas identified by the children.

Suggested questions which could be asked around the text and possible responses:

- What kind of language does the author use? (*emotive, repetitive*)
- What is the mood of the text? (*sad, reflective*)
- What is the aim of the text? (*to demonstrate how difficult it is for some people to get water, to demonstrate the value and importance of access to clean water; to provoke sympathy and empathy*)
- What does the text not tell you? (*whether Rachel's husband works or what he does, what 'bad thing' has happened to Rachel and her family*)

Writing composition: guided group and independent work

In groups or pairs, children should summarise in as few words as

Suggested summary of Rachel's story

Rachel lives in a country called Tanzania. She spends her days collecting water from a hole in the ground.

Rachel has to walk with her baby a long way each day to reach the water because there is no water in the village where she lives. The water she collects is dirty and unsafe to drink.

Rachel is unhappy about her life and wishes it could be different. She knows she would be happier and be able to do many more things if she had water near her home.

shared text: identifying key ideas

Water is my life: Rachel's Story

Here I am again, down in a hole in some rocks, scooping cloudy water into a bucket. I do this all day, everyday. It is not how I want my life to be.

You children, in your classroom far away, learning to read more, to write better, take a few minutes to listen to my story. Hear how an 18 year old woman comes to spend all day, everyday, down in a hole in some rocks, scooping cloudy water into a bucket.

My name is Rachel Anton, my baby is called Laurent Julius. My country is Tanzania. I live with my husband in a small village in the countryside. For everyone water is life, for me water is my life. We have to drink, wash and cook like everyone else. Yet where I live there is no water. The land has dried up. Older people tell me there used to be so much more in wells – enough to live on. Something bad has happened, and it has happened to me and my family.

So everyday I get up early to walk the six kilometre journey from home to this waterhole. With Laurent Julius on my back, I have my hands free to carry four buckets and the scoop. Four buckets each day is just enough for our needs. I get to the waterhole at about 5am, and my day's work begins.

After scooping the cloudy water into the first bucket, I climb back out of the hole, and sit under a bough in the shade of the only tree. Then I wait for more water to collect in the hole, and down I go again. This goes on for as many as 15 long hours, until the buckets are full. Walking back is tough, late in the evening, with Laurent Julius on my back, my hands free to carry four full buckets. Then my day carries on, washing and cooking well into the night.

And imagine the colour of the water! It's just not safe. It often makes us ill. I am afraid that Laurent Julius will not grow up strong. Sometimes I am afraid he will not grow up at all.

Here I am then, a person down a hole. My name is Rachel – Rachel who walks, carries and scoops; Rachel who waits, scoops and walks; Rachel who carries, washes and cooks. Water is my life.

If we had clean water where I live it would be different. I could spend time working around the home and playing games with my son. I could talk to friends, and laugh and laugh. I could read more and write better. I would dance, my feet tapping the ground like raindrops.

Based on *Water is my life: Rachel's story* from WaterLiteracy, a resource for the Literacy hour (WaterAid 1999)

Further resources

The following is a list of titles which will offer opportunities for further activities on issues of Water for KS2. They should be available through your local Development Education Centre (DEC).

Clean Water: A right for all (UNICEF) Activities on water, its supply, control and use, including pollution.

Water: the Earth Strikes Back (Belitha Press) A book exploring how water shapes the lives of people, plants and animals worldwide. Looks at global inequalities in water supply and how people can help guard this vital resource.

Water Performance (WaterAid) contains suggestions for using drama, dance, music, puppet and mask making to explore water problems and their solutions in developing countries.

My world (WWF-UK) A resource pack for primary teachers.

Eco-Schools (see back for details) Produce a Water booklet for teachers who wish to develop the topic as an element of the Eco-Schools scheme.

The Green Umbrella (Jill Brand - WWF) Stories, songs and poems which provide good starting points for classroom discussions and assemblies. The book contains seven sections including water.

Primary Topic Poster Packs (Oxfam) A range of colour poster sets focusing on key primary topics including water. Each topic set contains a variety of images and information as well as activity ideas.

Fresh water (UNESCO-UNEP) A series of posters, including water resources, supply and pollution.

The water game (Christian Aid) A game on water resources and supply in developing countries.

Feedback on these activity ideas would be much appreciated. Comments can be sent to HEC or your local DEC or made via the Global Footprints website

Further ideas, contacts and information

Thoughts on water

A poem based on a speech given by Chief Seattle, an American Indian chief, in 1854

*The shining water that moves in streams and rivers
is not just water,*

It is the blood of our ancestors.

*You must remember that it is sacred,
You must teach your children it is sacred.*

*Each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes,
Tells of events and memories in the life of my people.*

*The water's murmur
Is the voice of my father's father.*

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst.

The rivers carry our canoes and feed our children.

*You must henceforth give the rivers the kindness
you would give any brother*

Text supplied by Powys Environment and Development Education Centre

Activity ideas based on the poem

This is a suitable water poem for exploring how the use of expressive and descriptive language can create moods, build tension, and describe attitudes or emotions (NLS year 4 term 2).

What is the author's intention and central message?

What words and phrases has the author chosen to create mood and tension? (*E.g. ghostly reflections, the water's murmur, water as a symbol of ancestral blood, water as a brother*)

Group discussion activity

This activity enables children to practise listening and responding appropriately to others and talking effectively as members of a group.

Divide pupils into several groups. Give each group a copy of the 8 statements below. Ask pupils to discuss the statements and sort them according to statements into two groups – Agree/Disagree

Allow groups to circulate round each group to discuss the similarities and differences allowing one person from each group to explain and justify their group's decisions

- ◆ We have a lot of water in this country so there is no need for us to use less water.
- ◆ People should be able to use as much water as they want.
- ◆ People in this country waste water.
- ◆ Some countries will never have enough water.
- ◆ We can't help countries where people don't have clean water.
- ◆ The amount of water there is to drink depends on how much rain there is.
- ◆ We need clean water to be healthy.
- ◆ People who pollute water should be punished.

Thanks to Gloucestershire DEC (01242 224311) for suggesting this activity which is based on an activity contained in *Clean Water: A right for all* (UNICEF)

Further information about water

The following organisations will be able to provide details of their work on water

Oxfam 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ Tel:01865 313600
Produce a range of global citizenship education packs. Education catalogue contains extensive range of resources across the curriculum. To order phone 01202 712933. Also have a website dedicated to teachers and children which contains information and activities: www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet

WaterAid 27 - 29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UB Tel: 020 7793 4500 e-mail: wateraid@wateraid.org.uk. Website contains excellent interactive quiz for children: www.wateraid.org.uk Also produce *WaterLiterate* and *WaterNumerate*, resources for the KS2 literacy and numeracy lessons.

Friends of the Earth 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ
Tel: 020 7490 1555 www.foe.co.uk Produce information sheets and other resources suitable for young people on all environmental issues including water supply and pollution.

Eco-Schools Elizabeth House, The Pier, Wigan WN3 4EX
Tel: 01942 824620 www.tidybritain.org.uk The European wide programme and award scheme aiming to increase environmental awareness and encourage pupil participation in managing their surroundings in schools.

Development Education Centres (DECs)

This resource has been produced by the Humanities Education Centre, a DEC in Tower Hamlets, with contributions from other DECs. Your local DEC will be able to provide a range of exciting resource ideas for the teaching of Global Citizenship. To find your nearest DEC contact:

Development Education Association,
29-31 Cowper Street, London, EC2A 4AP
☎ 020 7490 8108 e-mail devedeassoc@gn.apc.org

Your local DEC :