

# car adverts: tell it like it is

A literacy activity addressing key elements of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) while encouraging children to think

## Relevant elements of the Year 4 NLS Teaching Programme

NLS reference: Year 4 term 3: Non-Fiction

### Reading comprehension:

●19: To evaluate advertisements for their impact, appeal and honesty, focusing in particular on how information about the product is presented: exaggerated claims, tactics for grabbing attention, linguistic devices, e.g. puns, jingles, alliteration, invented words.

### Writing Comprehension

- ◆ 25 To design an advertisement, such as a poster or **radio jingle** on paper or screen, e.g. for a school fête or **an imaginary product, making use of linguistic and other features learnt from reading examples**

## Global citizenship aims of the advertisement evaluation activity

- ✓ To encourage children to think critically and use available evidence to present a reasoned case
- ✓ To help children detect bias, opinion and stereotyping
- ✓ To help children understand the relationship between people and the environment
- ✓ To promote a sense of responsibility for the environment and the use of resources
- ✓ To begin to recognise the consequences on others of choices made
- ✓ To equip children with the knowledge and understanding to empower them to take positive actions which ensure greater social justice and protect the environment.

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

## QCA Scheme of Work for Geography

There are clear links between the aims of the activities in this leaflet and the activities identified in the QCA Geography scheme of work for Key Stages 1 and 2. In particular Year 4 Unit 8: *Improving the environment*. These global citizenship leaflets provide an opportunity to add a global perspective to the problems of traffic and transport.

## Suggested lesson structure

Our TV screens, radios, newspapers and magazines are saturated with car advertisements. Vast sums of money are spent on promoting the car compared to other forms of transport such as public transport or cycling. This activity aims to alert children to the exaggerated claims and false impressions given by car advertisements. Before this activity it would be useful if children cut out car adverts from magazines and newspapers and write down images and slogans used in radio and TV adverts.

### Reading comprehension

Children should begin by brainstorming the main 'selling points' used in car advertisements. Examples the children have collected should be shared with the whole class. Children should consider how the adverts present information, how they make an impact and the devices they use for grabbing attention. The selling points are likely to relate to factors such as speed, freedom, pleasure, pride, status, independence and security.

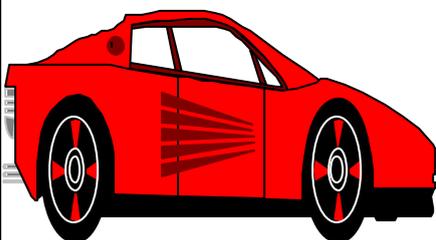
Using the list of factors raised, children can begin to question the honesty and accuracy of the adverts considering any exaggerated claims. They should then brainstorm some of the negative aspects of cars, based on their own experience or from secondary sources. This could be done by asking them to think of a rebuttal to each positive point presented in the adverts. Examples should be written up on a board or OHT to provide information for the writing task. Examples might include: speed - exciting but it kills and poses great dangers to pedestrians, cyclists and wildlife; freedom - but only to those able to afford a car. Greater investment in improving public transport could provide freedom for rich or poor.

### Writing activity

The children should work through the tasks opposite which culminate in writing a script for a 1 minute radio advertisement for Friends of the Earth (FOE). The first section, examining slogans used by FOE, could be considered as a whole class, or by groups who feedback their thoughts before progressing onto the writing activity. The advert should identify some of the negative aspects of cars. More able children may be able to plan a spoof advert (see box below). Adverts could highlight:

- reduced levels of fitness caused by increased reliance on the car
- dangers to our streets posed by traffic, particularly for children
- the thousands of deaths and injuries on the roads each year
- traffic congestion particularly in and around towns and cities,
- air pollution and the way this aggravates asthma
- the release of carbon dioxide from cars which adds to global warming
- reduced investment in public transport caused by increasing reliance on cars which effects those most dependent on it, particularly the young and the old
- 'road rage' caused by the frustration of congestion

## Example of short spoof advert



The new *Egoer* can reach a top speed of 108mph, not that you will ever be allowed to do that kind of speed because the top legal speed in the UK is 70pmh. It can do 0-60 mph in just 6 seconds, though with all the traffic jams caused by thousands of other cars we have sold, you'll be lucky to reach 25 mph. But if you do manage to reach up to 40mph you will kill anyone who stands in your way.

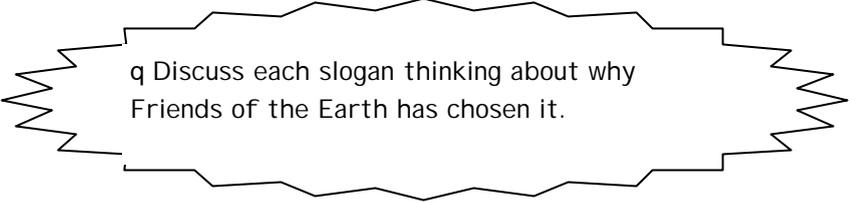
Sit back and relax in our luxurious interior for a stress-free journey – at least until your next attack of road rage. While you drive, free your mind of the global warming you are causing and the gases and chemicals you are spewing into the air worsening people's asthma. Enjoy the open road – if you can find one. But never fear! A new road will be on its way soon – cutting through a field or forest, speeding you along... to join the next traffic jam.

# Car adverts: the other side of the story

Car adverts love to use slogans that people will remember. What slogans have you heard or seen for car adverts? Write some of these down.

Here are some slogans that Friends of the Earth have used to try and put across the other side of the story.

- 🚗 **Cars are a real choke!**
- 🚗 **The car is going nowhere!**
- 🚗 **Cars cost the earth!**



q Discuss each slogan thinking about why Friends of the Earth has chosen it.

q Can you think of any other catchy slogans for a Friends of the Earth advert which aims to tell people about the problems and dangers of cars?

**NOW** plan a **1 minute radio advert** for Friends of the Earth. The advert should:

- 🚗 Tell people why cars may not be such a good thing
- 🚗 Choose information that you think will make people listen
- 🚗 Have one or more catchy phrase or slogan that people will easily remember
- 🚗 Give people ideas on how they can use other types of transport that are safer, more healthy and better for the environment

**You only have a minute! So get the message right!**

Here are some facts that may help you plan your advert...

- 4000 people are killed and many more thousands are injured on roads every year.
- Every 50 minutes a new car is made that will eventually kill someone.
- People sitting in a car in a traffic jam will breathe in three times more poisonous fumes than people walking or cycling outside the car.
- One in three car journeys are 1 km or less and 7 out of every 10 primary children who travel to school by car live just one to three km away from their school. These journeys could easily be walked, improving fitness and reducing traffic jams.
- Travelling across London by car takes as long now as it did 100 years ago: cars travel at the same speed as horses and carriages used to - just 12 km an hour!

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## Further resources

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

**Green Transport Pack** (WWF/Environmental Transport Association 1993) A pack full of information on current attitudes to travel, changing travel patterns and ideas for action both within and outside the classroom on how to reduce car dependency.

**Global Express** Edition 23 on Climate Change, produced by Development Education Project, Manchester, Tel: 0161 445 2495 email:depman@gn.apc.org www.dep.org.uk/globalexpress

**Primary topic posters: Transport** (Oxfam) contains a set of posters and teachers notes with activities aimed at KS1 but some activities and information relevant to KS2.

**A Safer Journey to School: A guide to school travel plans for parents, teachers and governors** available free from DfEE Publications, PO Box 5050, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ Tel: 0845 602 2260

Fax: 0845 603 3360

**On the Road** - one of *The Green Detective* series, John Barnes (Wayland 1992). Examines how different forms of transport affect the environment and poses a series of problems and issues for children to investigate.

**Transport** by Polly Goodman, part of the *Earth in Danger!* series (Hodder Wayland 2001). Examines a range of problems caused by transport from the local to the global as well as case studies from around the world and activity ideas.

*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

## Opinions on transport

Transport is a controversial issue with many contradicting demands. While many people agree they want less congestion and air pollution and want to feel safe walking and cycling in the streets they also want cheaper petrol and resent parking restrictions. This activity examines the wide range of views on transport and particularly the divergent views on the car.

The activity could be used to meet the Year 4 Term 3 pt. 23 Literacy requirement to present a point of view in writing, e.g. in the form of a letter, a report or a script, linking points persuasively and selecting style and vocabulary appropriate to the reader.

Using the selection of quotes below children in groups decide who might have said the statements and develop reasoned arguments for and against the points of view which they represent. They could present this in the form of a short presentation to others in the class or as a written report.

🚗 *"Cars should be banned from the town centre."*

🚲 *"Cycling is too dangerous and shouldn't be allowed."*

👤 *"Everyone who lives within a mile of their work or school should walk there."*

🚲 *"I have to dress very smartly in my line of business so I like to arrive at work looking absolutely perfect. I couldn't turn up to work on a bicycle!"*

🚗 *"I have to work late some evenings and feel much safer coming home in my car after dark."*

🚌 *"70 people can fit on my Double Decker bus instead of taking up about 200 metres of road space in their cars."*

🚌 *"The bus is always so crowded. At least I get a bit of peace in my car and I can listen to my radio or tapes."*

🚗 *"Cars are a nightmare! They belch out poisonous fumes and clog up our streets: they are suffocating our cities."*

*Based on an activity in the Green Transport pack - see further resources*

## Further information about transport

The following organisations will be able to provide details of their campaigning work on transport or climate change

**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](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet)

**Friends of the Earth** 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ  
Tel: 020 7490 1555 [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk) Produce information sheets and other resources suitable for young people on all environmental issues including transport

**Transport 2000** The Impact Centre, 12-18 Hoxton Street, London N1 6NG Tel: 020 7613 0743 email: [steve@transport2000.demon.co.uk](mailto:steve@transport2000.demon.co.uk)

The national environmental transport campaign working for sustainable transport policies that reduce traffic, promote walking and cycling and improve bus and rail services.

**Sustrans** 35 King Street, Bristol BS14DZ Tel: 0117 929 0888  
email: [info@nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk) website: [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) For information on Safe Routes To School Tel: 0117 915 0100 Sustrans works on practical projects to encourage people to cycle and walk and is behind two flagship projects: the National Cycle Network - 5000 miles of on-road and traffic-free cycle routes - and Safe Routes To School, encouraging schools, parents and local Councils to support the implementation of safe walking and cycling routes to and from school.

## 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](mailto:devedeassoc@gn.apc.org)

## Taking action on transport!

Children can be encouraged to:

- Lobby the School Council, Head Teacher and teachers to set up a walking bus. This is a bus with legs rather than wheels! A walking bus is a line of children, walking in pairs to school along a certain route with an adult driver at the front and 'conductor' at the back. (See Year 3/4 Transport Numeracy leaflet for details)
- Lobby the Head teacher and others in the school community to set up a *School Travel Plan* which clearly identifies how car journeys to and from school by teachers and parents alike are to be reduced
- Nag their parents to walk, cycle or use public transport instead of the car, especially for short journeys!

Your local DEC :