



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

Read how a cross-curricular approach to the topic of water can inspire a week of engaging activities

Louise Barnes, teacher at Perry Beeches School, Birmingham

Water can provide an abundance of opportunities for cross-curricular learning. It can help children to develop knowledge, skills and understanding within geography, science and technology, as well as create links with numeracy and literacy, too. Louise Barnes, teacher at Perry Beeches School in Birmingham, planned a five week water topic during the summer term, using the International Primary Curriculum unit as inspiration. On the following pages, Louise sets out her lesson plans.

Recommended resources

- *The Drop in my Drink* by Meredith Hooper (Frances Lincoln, £6.99 HB) is about the water on our planet and is an excellent book to share with your class during a water unit.
- The WaterAid website (www.wateraid.org/uk) provides excellent information and photographs about water.

Week one

A wet start

To launch the unit, I involved the children in a water obstacle race in the playground. Each team had a full bucket of water and had to transport the water in plastic cups through an obstacle course to fill another bucket at the end. It acted as a great introduction to the topic and learning started immediately. The children measured the amount of water that had been collected by each team. They

Did you know?

According to the World Health Organisation, more than 3,500,000 people die each year from water-related diseases

also discussed how much had been lost during transportation and how dirty it had become. The children thought that, being dirty, the water was now no good to use. This created an excellent link to a discussion about how many people in the world don't have running water in their homes and have to collect all their water, usually on foot. The children related their own water transportation experiences to this and quickly realised that even dirty water shouldn't be wasted.

The following day, we discussed the theme and the thoughts and ideas raised as a result of the race. This progressed into our

'Knowledge Harvest'. The class created mind maps of everything they already knew about water and talked about some of the things they would like to find out while working on the unit. The children were interested to learn more about the lives and experiences of children where water is not readily available in their homes.

Week two

Rivers and waterways

Using globes and maps, we looked at the world as a class from different perspectives, to discover how much of our Earth is covered in water. We used maps to locate the oceans and to learn how to identify some of the major UK waterways. Our school is in Birmingham, so we had the wonderful opportunity of using the nearby canals as a learning resource – investigating how the canals have been used as a means of transportation throughout history. We then compared UK waterways with others across the world, focusing on the Amazon. This work spanned two days, but there's scope for this section to be developed further as there was plenty of skill development, especially using globes and maps.

Week three

Water and habitats

Over the course of three days during this week, the unit concentrated on the children investigating the Amazon, researching the animals that live in and around the river, as well as looking at how humans live there. They were particularly interested in how the Amazonians use the river for washing, cleaning and transportation. We then went on to look at different environments ▶



influenced by water. We started with a look at the frozen regions of Iceland. The children compared the two habitats, identifying the similarities and differences between the two regions.

This then followed with an investigation into another extreme environment – the desert. The children investigated the lifestyle of the nomads, learning about their specific needs for survival without water being readily available. They also compared the practicalities of using a horse versus a camel for travelling across the desert.

At this stage of the unit, there were lots of opportunities for individual and collaborative research. We used Google™ Earth (earth.google.com) to focus on the particular destinations. The children used the internet; searching a selection of websites that I recommended, as well as reference books to investigate information further. They helped to create wall displays so that everyone could share in the learning.

Week four

Can I drink the sea?

To kick-start this part of the unit, the children spent half a day creating bar charts of the amounts of water compared to land on the surface of the Earth. I extended the learning by inviting the children to gather more facts to compare, such as the proportion of freshwater to saltwater, and how much of the freshwater is frozen at the North and South Poles and, as a result, inaccessible.

This helped the children to realise just how little water is available in the world for drinking – and that water has to be

shared by everyone. It inspired many questions about their world. This activity – along with several others within the water unit – helped the children to realise that they can actually have an influence on their world.

Did you know?

84 per cent of all water-related deaths are in children aged 0 to 14.

Almost two million children die each year due to a lack of access to clean water and sanitation

Better bathing

As a homework activity, I wanted the children to record their water usage at home. As a class, they compared their results and went on to consider the amount of water used in this country to the amount used by children in the Amazon. This activity captured the children's imaginations and led to some excellent discussions on ethical responsibility.

Under the sea

One of our classroom displays made during the topic linked to the theme 'under the sea' and included a wetsuit and flippers. The children were able to try these on and imagine what it was like to deep-sea dive. I used the display to prompt discussion about

underwater exploration – this generated some fantastic creative writing.

Week five

Within Perry Beches

As well as looking far and wide, we looked at water within the school. The children were asked to research where water is used in the school and where water was possibly being wasted. They came up with suggestions for conserving water and put some of these into action, such as making persuasive posters urging the whole school to help save water. It was an empowering learning activity for the children, many of who continued with the same approach at home!

The International Primary Curriculum

As a curriculum for learning, the IPC focuses on developing knowledge, skills and understanding of subjects set within cross-curricular thematic units of work that are both creative and challenging for children of all abilities. IPC actively supports WaterAid and each year makes a donation on behalf of every member school. Visit www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com or call 020 7531 9696. ■

ONLINE EXTRAS

Visit our website for water-themed activities and resources.

www.scholastic.co.uk/junioredplus