



Invent A Planet

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Invent a Planet is an idea for project work for young learners based on the materials available on the British Council's site for young learners

LearnEnglish Kids. You can find the materials here:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-topics-space.htm>

In the project students can find out more about all the planets, focus on one individual planet (Saturn) in a fun way, listen and/or read a story about a planet (The Cold Planet) and finally produce a creative and enjoyable piece of art work based on what they have learnt.

Getting students writing is one of the most difficult skill areas to develop. Teachers need to create the right atmosphere and the desire and motivation to write something and be creative. Above all we need to give the children activities which are stimulating and fun! A competitive element also helps. Children could send in their writing to the Learn English website or teachers could run a class competition.

To encourage children to write and produce a high-quality piece of writing we need exciting stimulus materials, plenty of vocabulary Input for practising words and structures, and some useful models. On this page you will find tips and suggestions of how to use the LearnEnglish materials on Planets to provide a basis for project work and a piece of creative writing and design work – whether for an individual child or a class project.

Stage 1 :Introduction to the planets

Introduce the general topic of planets and aliens by brainstorming what they know already. Do they know the names of the planets in our solar system? Can they put the planets in order? Then you could use the downloadable printable worksheet 'The Nine Planets' (Our Solar System) to give them reading practice and introduce some basic planet vocabulary such as 'rocky', 'rings', 'moons', 'supporting life' etc.

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-print-planets.pdf>

This could be reinforced with the flash activity on the planets which asks children to re-order them according to their distance from the Sun. You can find this at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-print-planets.pdf>

There is also a Flash-animated song called 'Flying from the sun to the stars.' which is useful to practise planet vocabulary, especially for younger children.

You can find this at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-songs-space.htm>

Stage 2: Focus on one planet

Now you could focus on an individual planet. The popularity poll on planets came up with Saturn and Pluto as the most popular planets – but you could choose any planet which stimulates interest in the children. There are materials on the Learn English website about the planet Saturn – a

downloadable quiz worksheet with answers and a gap-filling flash activity which practises more difficult vocabulary.

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-games-gapfill-saturn.htm>

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-print-saturn.pdf>

You could use the Internet to search for information on a particular planet but beware as some sites are much too difficult for children to access information easily. Some of the best websites are:-

http://kids.f9.net.uk/flash/planets/about_planets.html

www.frontiernet.net/~kidpower/planets.html

<http://spacekids.hq.nasa.gov> (the nasa site for kids – lots of information here!)

Note: these are links to external websites and are live at the time of writing. Please check the links before you use them with learners as some sites change and disappear quickly. Please note that the British Council cannot be held responsible for external websites.

Stage 3: An imaginary planet

The flash-animated story on the LearnEnglish site ‘The Cold Planet’ would provide a good lead-in to inventing planets and writing about them. It is a simple story of Neila (an alien) and Billy (an earth boy) who helps Neila by sending sunshine to her dark planet called Fliptune.

You can find the story here: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-stories-cold-planet.htm>

Apart from the story there is also an interactive wordsearch practising vocabulary from the story and a downloadable worksheet. This worksheet contains two parts – the first is a simple comprehension check on the story and the second provides stimulus questions for some creative and inventive thinking. It could be done by an individual child or as a class pair or group work activity. This piece of work can provide a basis for a really creative piece of artwork and writing. At this stage the teacher can provide feedback and correct errors during the drafting and note writing activity.

Stage 4: Doing the project work

For teachers this stage is probably the most difficult in terms of getting organised with pens, scissors, paints, glue, glitter and all the necessary materials – but it’s definitely worth it!

Children can use their draft piece of work from stage 3 to produce a piece of artwork and the accompanying written text on their imaginary planet. You could use shiny paper, glitter, old CDs, cotton wool and shiny paints to produce a collage of imaginary planets. Paper plates are a useful starting point to create planets as they are round and you can easily stick things on them. Aluminium foil is cheap and shiny.

A class could create a whole new solar system in a display frieze. The written texts could be word-processed or used as a basis for other computer-based activities. Extension tasks for fast finishers in class could be further work on their alien creatures, writing and /or illustrating them or even imagining their own stories visiting their new planet.