International Day of Forests

**Topic**
The International Day of Forests – raising awareness of the importance of forests

**Aims**
- To raise awareness of the importance of forests and the aims of the International Day of Forests
- To build learners’ vocabulary for talking about biodiversity in forests, their importance and the dangers they face
- To develop critical-thinking skills
- To develop planning, creativity and design skills

**Age group and level**
Primary (9–12 years)
CEFR level A2 and above

**Time**
60–90 minutes approximately or two shorter lessons

**Materials**
- YouTube video *International Day of Forests 2020: Forests and Biodiversity* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs)
- logo for the International Day of Forests, which can be downloaded from [https://www.fao.org/international-day-of-forests/logo-banners/en/](https://www.fao.org/international-day-of-forests/logo-banners/en/)
- copies of the worksheet (one per learner)
- the example poster (for the teacher to display/show the learners)
- large sheets of paper for making posters

**Introduction**
This lesson plan helps raise awareness of the importance of forests. It is based on the United Nations’ International Day of Forests, which takes place on 21 March every year, but can be used at any time of the year. The day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests, and people are encouraged to organise activities involving forests and trees, such as tree-planting campaigns.

In this lesson, learners think about the biodiversity of forests and learn about the four forest ‘layers’. Then they discover what threats forests face and why forests are so important for animals, people and the planet. They find out about the sorts of events that are organised for the International Day of Forests and, finally, they plan their own event and design a poster that they share with the class.
### Procedure

#### 1. Introducing the topic (5–10 minutes)

- Begin by doing a simple drawing of a forest on the board. Ask learners to guess what you’re drawing. First draw a tree, then some more trees of different heights, new plants, some birds, insects, etc.
  - You may like to look at this YouTube tutorial to help with your drawing, although it doesn’t need to be that detailed. The picture is complete around 3:10: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VR_FkA0_EVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VR_FkA0_EVE)

- Keep drawing/prompting until someone says ‘a forest’. Keep this picture on the board for the following stages.

- Write this sentence on the board under the picture: *Forests are home to ___ per cent of life on land.* Check understanding (on land, not in the sea) and ask learners what they think the percentage is.

- Tell the learners that they are going to watch a short video. They will hear the answer to the question at the beginning. Play the first five seconds of the video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs), twice if necessary, until they hear the answer: 80 per cent. [If it isn’t possible for you to show the video, just tell them whether their guess was right or wrong. Are they surprised by the answer?]

- Tell them that they’re going to watch the next part of the video and they should try to remember what they see. Play the video up to 0:35 (stop after *They are the heroes in the circle of life that keeps our planet healthy*). Invite them to say what they remember. [If you can’t show the video, invite learners to give their ideas about what you can see in a forest.]

- Write the answers at the side of the board: a red panda, a ladybird, a deer, a caterpillar, a bee, ants, a bird, tree, new plants (seedlings/shoot), fruit. Draw attention to the fact that there are so many different types of life in a forest. We call this ‘biodiversity’.

#### 2. Learning/revising vocabulary (20 minutes)

- Tell the learners that when we talk about a forest, we can divide it into four different ‘layers’. Draw lines across your picture to divide it, like in the above tutorial around 3:30.

- Write the different names of the forest layers at the top of the board and ask the learners if they can guess which layer goes where on the picture. Write the correct answers on the picture (from bottom to top: forest floor, understory layer, canopy layer, emergent layer).

- Now ask the learners to suggest an appropriate layer for the animals, insects, etc. from the video. [If you haven’t shown the video, the animals, insects, etc. that the learners guessed.] Try to elicit sentences such as *Young plants grow on the forest floor. The red panda lives in the canopy layer. The birds are in the emergent layer.* Accept all possible answers.
Tell them that they are now going to be ‘explorers’ and, in small groups, they're going to explore the forest. One of the explorers has a notebook and the others have binoculars (which they can mime) and are looking. They say what they can ‘see’ (plants, animals, insects, etc.) in each layer, and the learner with the notebook writes it down. Give them five minutes in their groups to write as many things as they can.

Bring the whole class back together and ask the groups what they think they’d find on the forest floor. Then do the same for the other layers. Example answers:

- **Forest floor**: tree roots, shoots (new plants), fallen leaves and branches, seeds, soil, insects, mushrooms (fungi), animals (frogs, snakes, deer, pigs, etc.)
- **Understory layer**: tree trunks, plants and flowers, insects, birds, bats, monkeys, lizards, snakes
- **Canopy layer**: leaves, fruit, monkeys, birds, frogs, lizards, snakes, bats
- **Emergent layer**: leaves, birds, bats, butterflies, bees, monkeys

If time permits, learners can draw their own forest picture. Ask them to divide their picture into layers and draw and label at least four things in each layer. Depending on how much time you have, the picture can be a rough sketch or a more detailed drawing.

**3. Awareness raising and critical thinking** (15–20 minutes)

- Write on the board *What is happening to a lot of forests in the world?* Tell the learners they are going to watch the end of the video to find out the answer. [If you are unable to play the video, have a short class discussion based on the learners’ existing knowledge and try to elicit some of the ideas below.]

- Play the video from 0:35 to the end.

- Elicit answers such as forests are disappearing, people are cutting them down (deforestation), people are destroying them, they are burning in fires. Why? To make space for farming (e.g. palm oil production), buildings, roads, etc. Because of accidental fires, often when the temperature is too hot. Ask learners how this makes them feel – sad, angry, worried, etc.

- Write on the board *What do forests give us? Why are forests important?*

- Display or give out the worksheet. Ask the learners what they can see in the pictures. Elicit vocabulary and phrases such as:
  - a bed / a bookshelf / furniture / in the house / wooden furniture
  - rainforest / birds and animals / biodiversity / a home for animals
  - a tree / a tall tree
  - water to drink / drinking water
  - medicine
- fire / wood / heating / energy
- pollution / city / cars / factories / there’s a lot of pollution
- a T-shirt / clothes
- rain / it’s raining
- global warming / carbon dioxide.

- Learners can work individually or in pairs or small groups to complete task 1. Alternatively, it could be done as a whole class.

- **answers (from left to right):** 6, 1, 9, 8, 7, 4, 3, 5, 10, 2

- Then ask them to use some of the ideas in task 1 to complete task 2.

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<tr>
<th>4. Planning an event and designing a poster (20–30 minutes)</th>
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<td><img src="https://www.dkfindout.com/us/more-find-out/special-events/international-day-forests/" alt="Image" /> (click ‘tree hug’ for more information)</td>
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- Show the learners the International Day of Forests logo. What can they see? *Trees in the shape of hearts.* What does this mean? *We need to love/take care of/help/save our forests.* When is the International Day of Forests? *On 21 March.*

- What happens on this day? Elicit that people, schools, organisations, etc. organise special things to do together (events).

- Show the example poster. Ask the learners:

  - What is the event? [a tree-hugging challenge – check they understand the meaning of ‘hug’ and ‘challenge’]
  - Why is this event important? [it’s important to love forests because we all need them – the event makes people think about forests and love trees]
  - When is it? [21 March – International Day of Forests]
  - Who is it for? [everyone – children and adults]
  - What do you need to do? [hug a tree]
  - What pictures are there? [a family in a forest, a child hugging a tree]

- Ask the learners to imagine what happens at this event – what do you have to do? Possible answers: *Hug as many trees as possible in one minute. Hug a tree, someone takes a photo, then post the photo on a website.* Would they like to take part in a tree-hug challenge?

  - Optional: show the picture on this page [https://www.dkfindout.com/us/more-find-out/special-events/international-day-forests/](https://www.dkfindout.com/us/more-find-out/special-events/international-day-forests/) (click ‘tree hug’ for more information)

- Tell the learners that they are going to work in small groups to plan another event for the International Day of Forests. Brainstorm some ideas as a class. Possible ideas: tree planting, a nature walk, a forest photo competition, a forest art competition, a poetry competition, etc.
**Lesson plan**

Using one of these ideas, or their own idea, learners plan an event and create a poster to advertise it. Remind them it must be something that is respectful to the forest. They should include the following information:

- What is the event?
- Why is this event important?
- When is it?
- Who is it for?
- What do you need to do?
- Pictures (they can include the International Day of Forests logo if they wish)

Display the posters on the wall in the classroom and once the learners have seen them all, ask them to say which events they would like to take part in and why.

### 5. Setting homework (5 minutes)

- For homework, learners could visit a forest or another place with trees (e.g. a park) and try observing a tree and, if they like, hugging it! They can tell the class about it next time.

- Alternatively, you could organise a photo/drawing competition for the International Day of Forests. Learners take a photo of or draw a tree/forest and present it to the class in the next lesson.

### Further ideas and resources

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – International Day of Forests
- BBC Bitesize – Tropical rainforest biomes
  [https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpmnb9q/revision/1](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpmnb9q/revision/1)
- UNECE – 10 facts to fall in love with forests
- LearnEnglish Kids – song and story
  [https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/songs/the-ballad-lisa-the-lemur](https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/songs/the-ballad-lisa-the-lemur)

### Contributed by

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