### International Day of Forests

**Important – please read**

This lesson has been adapted for teachers providing online classes. These notes are specifically for online lessons, and the accompanying PowerPoint has been designed to support the lesson activities. There is also guidance and advice for what teachers need to know and do before the lesson and at the beginning of the lesson. Please read the lesson instructions carefully before using them. They are for guidance only, designed to be used with the most common online platforms. You may need to adapt the lesson to the online platform you are working with.

**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**

The teacher will need:
- the accompanying PowerPoint
- YouTube video International Day of Forests 2020: Forests and Biodiversity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs)

The learners will need a pen or pencil and paper or a notebook.

**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.

Checklist for online teaching

Make sure you are familiar with the online platform you are using

- Have you tested your microphone and camera in the platform to make sure they work with it? A headset with a mic is usually better than a device’s in-built speakers and mic.
- Do the learners need a URL or code to join the class? Do they all have this?
- Do you know how to share what is on your computer screen so that the learners can see it?
- Do you know how to mute the learners’ microphones if you need to?
- Do you know how to use the ‘breakout rooms’ if the platform has this facility? Is this enabled?
- Does the platform have a ‘raise hand’ button that the learners can use to indicate they want to speak? You can also use this function to get them to indicate if they can hear you or see what you’re showing on the screen, or to hold a quick vote!
- Do you know what the platform looks like from a learner’s perspective? It may look different or have slightly different functions compared to the teacher’s view. If you use screenshots to explain to learners where to click on something, make sure they’re taken from a learner’s perspective.
- Do you know how to troubleshoot some of the technical issues that you or your learners might experience with the platform? Does it make a difference if they are accessing the platform from a mobile device or a certain browser?
- Do you know if your learners’ parents or another adult will be available during lessons to help them resolve technical issues?
- Have you considered safeguarding and child protection issues? For example, you may wish to insist that learners do not record the lessons.
- Most online platforms have support videos or tutorials available online. Have you looked at these?

General tips

- Make sure you have explained to your learners (and ideally a parent or another adult if they can be around during lessons) about how to use the basic functions of the platform, how to troubleshoot issues and how to check their settings. This could be done in an initial lesson where you practise using the different buttons and teach them the things to try if there are technical or connection issues. This is also a good opportunity to teach them the language connected with the platform, such as ‘mute’, ‘breakout room’, ‘refresh’, etc., which they will need each lesson in order to follow your instructions.
• Make sure you have explained to your learners the rules and the behaviour you expect during lessons, such as patience, respect for each other, writing only relevant things in the chat, etc.
• Always check your microphone and camera before each lesson and check with each learner at the start that you can hear and see each other, and that they can see what you share on the screen.
• Make sure all the learners know they must arrive on time and what they must bring, such as their notebook and pencil case. Many online learning platforms have a virtual waiting room. It’s a good idea to tell your learners to join the class at least five minutes before it begins to avoid disruption.

## Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the lesson</th>
<th>At the start of the lesson slide 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Before you start the lesson:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Test your microphone and camera to make sure they work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Make sure that you have the accompanying PowerPoint open and shared.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Welcome the learners as they arrive:</td>
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<td>- Check that you can all hear and see each other.</td>
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<td>- Check that they can see the first slide.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If they can’t, ask them (or ideally an adult they have present) to check their settings or troubleshoot in the way you have shown them previously. You may need to write this in the chat facility if they cannot hear you.</td>
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<td>• Tips:</td>
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<td>- Consider having a short task for the learners to do until they have all arrived. For example, you could have a poll set up (if your platform has this function) or a simple activity where they write in the chat, such as to say what they’ve done that week.</td>
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<td>- Consider muting learners’ microphones after greeting them to avoid having too much background noise when you get started. Tell them if you do this and explain why. You could also suggest that, if possible, they use a headset with a mic rather than their device’s in-built speakers and mic.</td>
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| 1. Introducing the topic (5–10 minutes) slides 2, 3 and 4 |
| • Begin by doing a simple drawing of a forest. You could either use the whiteboard function of your online platform or simply use a mini whiteboard or piece of paper that you show to the camera. 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. Keep drawing/prompting until someone says ‘a forest’.
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

- Show slide 2 of the PowerPoint and read the sentence: *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 to find out the answer. Play the first five seconds of the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSGqpNTXjHs, twice if necessary, until they hear the answer: 80 per cent. Show slide 3. 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. You could note their answers by annotating slide 3 or typing them in the chat. Show slide 4 and 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)

**slides 5, 6 and 7**

- Show slide 5. Tell the learners that when we talk about a forest, we can divide it into four different ‘layers’. The names of the four layers are on the left of the slide. Invite learners to use these to label the picture correctly. Start with number 1 and use your cursor to point to the forest floor in the bottom picture. Can they guess the name of this layer? The word ‘floor’ can help. After they’ve guessed the four layers, show the correct answers on slide 6.

- This next activity could be done in pairs/small groups in breakout rooms, but it can also be done as an individual activity. Show slide 7. Tell learners that they are going to pretend to be ‘explorers’ and they’re going to explore the forest. They need to use binoculars (which they can mime) to look in each layer. Give them five minutes to write as many things (plants, animals, insects, etc.) as they can.

  - If working in breakout rooms, put learners in small groups and nominate one of them to be responsible for making the list.

  - If working individually, give them some thinking time before writing.

- Bring the whole class back together and ask what they think they’d find on the forest floor. Then do the same for the other layers. You could annotate slide six with some of the ideas. 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
### 3. Awareness raising and critical thinking (15–20 minutes)

**Slides 8, 9, 10 and 11**

- Show slide 8. Tell the learners they are going to watch the end of the video and find out the answer to this question: *What is happening to a lot of forests in the world?*
- 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.
- Show slide 9. 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.
- Show slide 10. Read the title *Ten reasons to love forests and trees*. Then read the first sentence or invite a learner to read. Ask the learners to match the sentence to one of the pictures. Continue in this way with the other sentences. Encourage language such as *I think it’s picture a because we can see furniture made of wood or It might be picture d because we can see water to drink.*
  - answers: 1b, 2j, 3g, 4f, 5h, 6a, 7e, 8d, 9c, 10i
- Show slide 11. Ask the learners to complete the sentences in the chat, using the ideas that you have just discussed. Read out some answers. Help them formulate their sentences if necessary.

### 4. Planning an event and designing a poster (20–30 minutes)

- Show the learners the International Day of Forests logo on slide 12. 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 on slide 13. 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/ (click ‘tree hug’ for more information)

Tell the learners that they are going 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. Write the ideas on the online whiteboard or in the chat.

Tell the learners they need to choose one of the brainstormed events, or think of a different one, and create a poster to advertise it.

- They can work either in breakout rooms in pairs or small groups or individually.
- They could use a design tool such as Canva, or alternatively they could work collaboratively on Google Docs. If they are working individually, they could work with paper and pens.

Remind them it must be something that is respectful to the forest. They should include the following information (show slide 14):

- 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)
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<td>• UNECE – 10 facts to fall in love with forests <a href="https://unece.org/forestry/news/10-facts-fall-love-forests">https://unece.org/forestry/news/10-facts-fall-love-forests</a></td>
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Contributed by

Jo Blackmore