

## CELEBRATING OUR FORESTS

### Teacher Overview

Students will learn about the importance of forests as ecosystems and for humans (physically, spiritually and economically). Students will conduct internet research and use this research for creative writing and developing listening/ comprehension skills.

### Video

Forest Heroes from North America – suitable for viewing with all activities but relates specifically to activity 3.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/I5C5-zjTCIs>

### Level

English and Geography

Years 4, 5 and 6

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the importance of forests as ecosystems (for example, in relation to climate change) and for humans (physically, spiritually and economically)
- Conduct internet research
- Develop listening, comprehension and writing skills.

### Background

The General Assembly of the United Nations has declared the 21st of March will be the 'International Day of the Forst' - something special that is worth celebrating around the world.

Forests are special. As ecosystems, they play a key role in the fight against climate change. They also make an important contribution to our economy, providing excellent opportunities for recreation, tourism and employment.

To highlight our relationship with forests, 2011 was declared the 'International Year of Forests'. All around the world people celebrated forests - thinking about how we use them, what they provide for us and how we can look after them for the future. Human connection with forests is vital to their survival.

### The Activity Overview

There are a number of activities to choose from in this lesson. You may choose to undertake all of them or the ones most relevant to what you wish to achieve.

There is a students worksheet to accompany these activities.

## Activity 1 - International Day of the Forest

1. Discuss what the students know about the United Nations and its role. List any other 'days' or years the United Nations have declared.
2. Discuss the importance of having the United Nation declare an international day for forests.
3. List all the reasons that the students can think of to help celebrate trees and forests in their local community and school.
4. Have them plan an activity to celebrate the International Day of the Forest. This could include an excursion, walk around the neighbourhood or a community activity.

## Activity 2 – Letters from Trees

In 2011, students from all over the world were invited to participate in the International Year of the Forests by submitting a creative writing piece. A worldwide letter writing competition was launched, asking young people to imagine themselves as a trees and write a letter to explain why it's important to understand and protect forests.

On the student worksheet are the submissions from the winners.

1. Read the two winning letter extracts and discuss why forests are important to these two students.
2. Have the students explore the different pressures that may be on the forests of China and Barbados.
3. Have the students take a walk around the school yard and select a tree that they would like to be. Students then write a description of the tree along with the characteristics that best describes it.
4. Working individually, ask the students to write a letter from the tree to themselves. Suggestions for ideas could be that the tree wants to tell the students about the animals that live in the tree or feed off the tree; the important role it plays in cleaning the air in our environment or how protective it feels towards the students as it casts its shadow.
5. Students read out letters to class.

## Activity 3 – Be a Forest Hero

1. Watch the video of Madison Vorva and Rhiannon Tomtishen, Forest Heroes in North America - <https://www.youtube.com/embed/l5C5-zjTCIs>
2. The students complete the worksheet and discuss their answers. The students are asked to think about the impact of clearing forests in third-world countries and the impact it has on the animal, plant and human life in these countries.
3. Working in pairs, have the students discuss what they can do to help keep the forests in other countries. Answers should include not buying products with uncertified palm oil; or only buying timber from PEFC or FSC certified timbers – such as those in Australia.
4. Students investigate what the difference is between Australian sustainable forest management and the unregulated deforestation happening in third-world countries. Students could be directed to investigate the burning of forests in Malaysia and Indonesia or deforestation in the Amazon.
5. Working in pairs have the students research online the plight of overseas forests then brainstorm the country that they would like to be a forest hero in and what they would like to do.
6. Students are to write a piece talking about the plight of a forest and as a Forest Hero, what would you do.

## Sources:

Australian forest information -

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/sofr/sofr-2013>

UN International Tree Day: <http://www.un.org/en/events/forestsday/>

UN International Year of the Tree 2011 - <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/>

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification – PEFC - Sustainable Timber Certification - <http://www.pefc.org>

Forest Stewardship Council - FSC - <https://au.fsc.org/en-au>

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