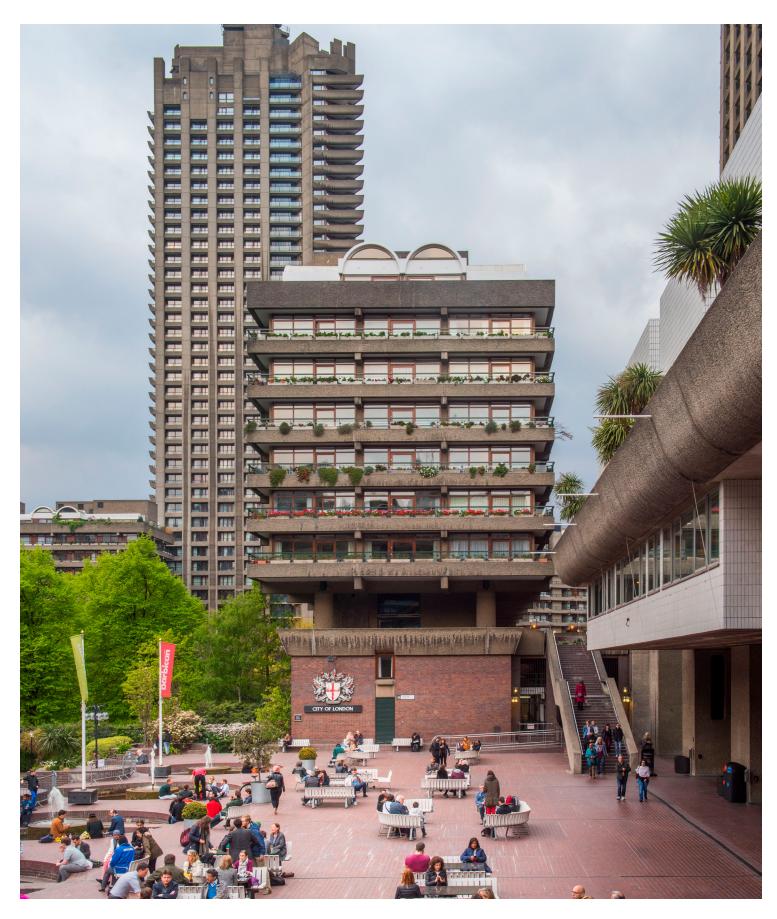# O UR T IME ON EARTH

Creative Learning:
**Teacher Notes
Future Cities**

barbican

Plan Your Visit

Our Time on Earth runs from 5 May – 28 August at the Barbican Centre. The exhibition takes place in the Curve, Pit Theatre and foyer. School groups can book to come any time, and we have limited slots for tours and workshops on Tuesdays at 2pm and Thursdays at 10am from 10 May – 28 July.

Please also find our digital Exhibition Guide to support your teaching.

Using this resource

This resource is for the classroom, and complements the exhibition *Our Time on Earth*, but you might use it even if you have not attended with your students.

Aimed at Key Stage 3.

In here you will find…
- An introduction to the artworks *Planet City* and *Ideal City*
- Notes on **rewilding**, **urbanisation** and **radical action**
- Discussion points and questions
- New vocabulary
- Activities for creative writing and political thinking
- Further links to London-based climate action campaigns and wildlife areas

Curriculum Links

Our Time on Earth brings together indigenous thinkers, artists, scientists, activists, architects and more. Our resources reflect the interdisciplinary, collaborative ambition of the project, as we acknowledge the climate emergency affects every realm of life and every subject on the curriculum. We aim to provide opportunities for teachers to engage students with climate action in a holistic way. Below is some guidance for where the subject matter links to the curriculum.

Key Stage 3 Citizenship –
- the different electoral systems used in and beyond the United Kingdom and actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond
- diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity

Key Stage 3 English –
- writing composition

Key Stage 3 Science –
- the interdependence of organisms in an ecosystem, including food webs and insect pollinated crops
- how organisms affect, and are affected by, their environment, including the accumulation of toxic materials
- how changes in the environment may leave individuals within a species, and some entire species, less well adapted to compete successfully and reproduce, which in turn may lead to extinction
- the importance of maintaining biodiversity and the use of gene banks to preserve hereditary material
- the importance of plant reproduction through insect pollination in human food security

Key Stage 3 History –
- ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901

Key Stage 3 Geography –
- physical geography relating to: geological timescales and plate tectonics; rocks, weathering and soils; weather and climate, including the change in climate from the Ice Age to the present; and glaciation, hydrology and coasts
- human geography relating to: population and urbanisation; international development; economic activity in the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary sectors; and the use of natural resources
- understand how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments and the climate; and how human activity relies on effective functioning of natural systems

Key Stage 3 Design and Technology –
- use research and exploration, such as the study of different cultures, to identify and understand user needs
- identify and solve their own design problems and understand how to reformulate problems given to them
- investigate new and emerging technologies
- understand developments in design and technology, its impact on individuals, society and the environment, and the responsibilities of designers, engineers and technologists

Cities in the Future

Ideal City and *Planet City* imagine the cities of tomorrow, exploring the potential for urban life as the site of radical change in response to the climate emergency.

Planet City is a short film set in a future world where the human population has retreated to one giant city. The rest of the planet is left to be rewilded, and for nature to take over again. The installation in *Our Time on Earth* also showcases five of the costume pieces from the film designed by Ane Crabtree, who uses costume to demonstrate the multiculturalism in the city. It invites you to consider that climate change is not just a technological problem, but an ideological one rooted in culture, power and politics.

You can see the film online here

Ideal City is a public installation from research and design lab SPACE10 in partnership with Modem. It invites visitors to experience how cities adapt to the new global challenges while creating a better everyday life for all people in urban areas. These cities are viewed through binoculars you might have seen by the seaside. Exploring different types of cities under the titles of "resourceful", "accessible", "shared", "safe" and "desirable", *Ideal City* is a reminder that in order to tackle the climate crisis head on, we must think about the other crises we are facing, which are overlapping. It shows us that cities are at the heart of the problem and the solution.

You can read more about the project here

Cities Today

76% of people in the world live in cities, and global urbanisation is accelerating fast. Cities are where we see growing inequality, polluted air and unequal access to green space or affordable homes. That said, they are also youthful, diverse, thriving communities buzzing with ideas, and they are where most of us live, making them crucial to a sustainable future.

Do

Create mindmaps as a group or in partners and discuss your own city under the headings of "resourceful", "accessible", "shared", "safe", "desirable".

In different colours jot down:
— **Any words you associate with this idea**
— **Any examples you can think of, real or imagined**
— **Any statements to describe how you might change your own city to achieve this**
— **Additional comments linking these ideas to climate change**

Tip: explore SPACE10's ideas around these words here.

New Vocabulary

Introduce the new concepts to the class that will be needed for the lesson.

Urbanisation – the process of making an area more urban through the development of cities and towns
Colonialism – a practice of control, the domination of an area or people by another nation or people, often by establishing "colonies" and generally with the aim of economic dominance
Rewilding – the practice of restoring and protecting natural processes and wilderness areas to increase biodiversity where it has been depleted due to human activity
Biodiversity – the variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem. Some of the major causes of biodiversity depletion are land use (for agriculture or urban expansion), pollution and the warming climate
Radicalism – the beliefs or actions of people who advocate complete political or social reform

Ask

What would your Ideal City look like? Feed back on the thoughts from the previous exercise. You may want to do further research into positive and negative examples the group have come up with.

Tip: You could also complete this Living Cities readers' survey with POLITICO and use it as a framework for further discussion.

Land and Urbanisation

Tensions between the use of land for urbanisation, agriculture or industry and the protection of our environment are getting hotter. Whilst cities are needed to house our populations, create cultural hubs and provide jobs, it is important to think about who they're for, and how they are created. In his film *Planet City*, Liam Young is exploring the radical idea of a future where "stolen land" across the world was given to nature to become wilderness again.

Do

In partners, define what Liam Young means by "stolen land"? Who was it stolen from, and by who?

Lead a discussion with your students around this question, and explore what the artist may mean. Feed back on their answers, and if they haven't already, define the connection between colonialism and climate change and inform the students in order to help contextualize Young's work.

You may unpack this by explaining that while colonialism has a long and complex history, the common factor is that countries and empires engaged with colonialism take territories by force or invade land inhabited by indigenous people to seek new lands. If the students attended *Our Time on Earth*, you might connect this to the film showcased there, *Wild Arrow #7* by Selvagem. Under colonial thinking, land is seen as a business enterprise, and local inhabitants either obstacles to be removed or workforces to be controlled. "Nature" is seen as a product, a resource to be extracted, for economic purposes. Colonialism, which began in the early modern period in Western countries (and particularly Britain), is one of the key causes for the carbon in the air and the depletion of global biodiversity.

Do

Write a very short review of *Planet City*. Use the following to help structure the exercise:

I think...
What message is the film sending? How might this idea help us in the fight against climate change?

I feel...
Is it fair that everyone should leave their homes? Who should get to decide on this idea? Would you want this to happen?

I wonder...
What part of the world is Planet City in? What would you like to ask the artist? Would there be a leader of the city? If so, who?

Planet City is a multi-cultural city. The short film shows a planetary festival, linking up celebrations held by different cultures throughout the year. In exploring the idea of "rewilding", Young is connecting colonialism with biodiversity, human diversity and climate change. Use the costumes by Ane Crabtree, which are inspired by parades and festivals, to discuss global power struggles within the climate movement. You might unpack this by discussing the divide between the Global North and the Global South. Many of the costumes allude to cultures from the Global South, where the impact of climate change is felt the most, but where there is least responsibility for pollution and biodiversity loss. Why might the artists have chosen to show this through costume?

Respond

Study the costumes that represent these diverse cultures and practices. The costumes show different workers in the city, named "drone shepherds", "code walkers", "beekeepers", "algae divers", "bot herders" and "zero waste weavers". Draw an outline of one of the costumes you are most drawn to. Within this silhouette, brain storm words that come to you in response to the costume, and its title.

- **What does it make you think of?**
- **How does it make you feel?**
- **What work does this person do?**
- **What might you want to know more about?**
- **What culture might they celebrate or belong to?**

Rewilding

Rewilding is a concept which describes the large-scale restoration of ecosystems, so that nature is left to take care of itself. Rewilding seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species, allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within. While rewilding can learn from the past (hence the name of "re" wilding) it is firmly about the future, and the exploration of the possibilities when priority is given to a thriving ecosystem, rather than exploiting land for resources.

Rewilding is seen as important because it allows for "biodiversity". No single organism lives in isolation. They live in ecosystems held together by countless relationships known as the "web of life". "Biodiversity" is the formal term used to capture the variety and complexity of life. Humanity depends on a thriving natural world to provide us with clean air and water, pollinating plants, carbon capture, food and medicine, pest control and materials. The more biodiverse an ecosystem is, the stronger and more resilient it is to change.

In the dominant campaigns relating to climate change, the focus has been on the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon into the atmosphere. Many campaigns focus on targets to reach "net zero" in terms of carbon emissions. A much lesser known issue is mass extinction or the depletion of biodiversity. Without the biodiversity in the oceans, reefs, forests, soil and territories across the globe, humans cannot survive on earth.

The debate

Whilst rewilding can create thriving habitats for wildlife, which our ecosystem depends on, we must also consider the impact of these projects on communities around the world and in the UK. Below are some examples of points that can cause debate around the idea of rewilding.

Ask

Which land?
Conservation projects and the creation of National Parks based on Western science have clashed with traditional ecological knowledge across the globe, causing mass displacement of indigenous groups who have interacted with and protected that land for generations. For example, the Great Lakes Twa. 82% of the world's biodiversity is protected by 5% of the population, made up of indigenous communities with traditional ecological knowledge.

Where will we grow food?
Some people worry about the impact on food production if more rewilding projects are created. Others argue that food production could be much more efficient and nature positive, by growing more diverse crops and with less chemicals. 72% of the UK's land is used for agriculture, and it is Europe's most nature depleted country.

Can we really be wild?
Some people, particularly farmers, worry about the rewilding practice of introducing species that are seen as habitat-creators. An example of this in the UK is the recent introduction of the beaver in Scotland and the south of England. These new species might be predators, nuisances to crops, or multiply too quickly if the creators of the rewilding project are not careful. Ecosystems are fragile and can become unbalanced, particularly if they are not biodiverse and therefore robust.

Do

Explore biodiversity across the globe. As a class, view the Biodiversity Intactness Index created by the Natural History Museum. This is a tool created by scientists to campaign for nature positivity and measure it accurately across the globe. Which zones might be the most important ones to keep intact? Explore the UK compared to Europe. What might be the cause of this depletion?

Tip: You may want to talk about ways of measuring biodiversity compared to levels of carbon in the atmosphere or global warming.

Further Activities

Here are some more ways to respond to these artworks that might link to your subject lesson. Use these if needed to prepare students for the longer writing exercise.

Respond

Planet City
If Planet City is never meant to be seen as a serious idea, what is the purpose of the film?

Can art be a tool for change? If so, how?

Discuss the concept of "radical ideas". Ask the class to do a three minute freewriting exercise where they write and repeat sentences beginning with "a future where..." with different answers in a stream of consciousness. Ask them to share back. Are there any interesting ideas? What is the point of thinking radically?

- **Would you want to live in Planet City? Why?**
- **What might some of the obstacles be to achieving a radical project like this?**
- **If Planet City existed, should there be a leader? And if so, who?**
- **If this idea was never meant to be put into practice, what is the purpose of this film?**
- **What are some of the problems that these projects are trying to solve?**
- **Can art be a tool for change? If so, how?**

Respond

Ideal City
Draw your own Ideal City. Use a skyline, map, or a highstreet as a starting point. What are the most important features to include for you? A river? A theme park? A cinema? Good shops? Who are your neighbours? How easy is it to get places? How much does it cost to go out for a meal, or see a show?

Choose one of the following and use it to brainstorm ideas for what the city might look, smell and feel like.

- **A city with no cars**
- **A city where all the old buildings were updated to be energy efficient**
- **A city where everyone lives in shared buildings with shared gardens**
- **A city where there are pockets of wilderness**
- **A city completely powered by solar panels**
- **A city where everyone has access to excellent education**
- **A city where art and culture is always free**
- **A city where everyone grows their own food**
- **A city where residents decide what buildings are built and where**
- **A city that is also a National Park**

Create

A day in the life of Planet City

Use the ingredients as a stimulus to write a diary of someone living in Planet City

Here are some prompts to help you…

- What time do they wake up?
- What can they see out of the window?
- What year is it? What day is it?
- Who is your neighbour?
- How much space do you have?
- Is there a city centre?
- Where do you first go?
- How far do you have to travel?
- Who do you meet?
- What do you hear? Smell?
- What non-human creatures do you meet?
- How do you spend your evening?
- What do you do at meal times?
- Who do you live with?
- What is the border like between the city and the rest of the world?
- What does your character think of where they live?

Courtesy of Liam Young

- **1 city**
- **10,157,030,257 people**
- **165 storeys**
- **4,311,543,982 bicycles**
- **49,445,671,570 solar panels**
- **932 zettabytes of data**
- **684,931,530 heads of lettuce**
- **2,034,965,388 tomatoes**
- **342,465,700 fish**
- **312,503,470 kitchens**
- **42,877,520,340 fruit trees**
- **148,200,520 km2 of protected park**
- **7,047 languages spoken**
- **2,555 cultural festivals and holidays**
- **42,457 TV channels**
- **1,117,273,328 left handers**
- **23,310,023 birthday parties per day**
- **90,572,730 bee hives**
- **97,896,432 songs**
- **254,082 deaths per day**

Create

Challenge: Imagine you are a journalist sent from another planet to come and investigate Planet City. Arriving at the city border, you are given a tour.

- **Write a letter to your family back home about what you have seen. What will you tell them?**
- **How would you describe the city?**
- **How would you explain the city's backstory?**

Tools for Engagement: London and Climate Action

Citizens in the Making:

An online interactive quiz that helps young people understand their skills and interests, and uses that to help them create their own ways to change the world around them. Take the quiz to find out your change-maker type and get ideas for how you can get involved in your local community.

London based resources for climate engagement:

Campaigns for making London more sustainable:
London Leap
National Park City (London)

Community gardens
Phytology
The May Project Gardens
Spitalfields City Farm (Tower Hamlets)
Hackney City Farm (Hackney)
Calthorpe Community garden (Camden)
Union of Hackney Gardens (Hackney)
The Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston (Haggerston)
Arnold Circus (Tower Hamlets)
Walworth Garden (Southwark)
Eden Nature Garden (Lambeth)
Phytology (Tower Hamlets)
The May Project Gardens (Merten)
Grow 2 Know (Kensington and Chelsea)
Want more? Check out the Capital Growth gardens map.

Community food networks:
OrganicLea
Social Farm and Gardens
Community Food Growers Network

Global campaigns for climate:
Young Friends of the Earth

Campaigns against climate racism:
Wretched the Earth
Black Outside

Campaigns for equal access to nature:
Land in Our Names
London Community Land Trust
Landworkers Alliance
Black Girls Hike

Campaigns against unequal access to clean air:
Choked Up

Rewilding:
Wild London
Earthwatch
Rewilding Britain
The Half-Earth Project
Knepp Estate
Kent Wildlife Trust
Wild Ennerdale

Can I Live?

By Fehinti Balogun
Produced by Complicité
A new online performance about the climate emergency. With rap, theatre and animation, Fehinti links the climate crisis & social justice, finding hope, through activism, for the future.

Catch the Trailer of the film here
If you want to discover more about the ecological emergency, climate justice and the creatives behind this filmed performance download the digital resource pack here.

To screen the film at your school contact creativeengagement@complicite.org

Credits

CITY OF LONDON

The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre