

Lesson 1: Why did Mr's McCormack's business disappear down the river?

Students will learn:

- about a topical environmental issue (floods);
- about the connections between human activities and flooding;
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- use their imagination to consider other people's experiences;
- to analyse written information;
- to make links between cause and effect;
- to think about taking responsibility for our actions;
- to develop enquiry skills.

Starter

1. Start this lesson with some high impact images of flooding to engage the students.

It could be a short video-clip, a power-point presentation, or a set of photos.

A range of images of Boscastle from the BBC website are included with this activity. If you are using a local or current example, there are generally images available from this source.

2. Ask students what the images show.

What has or may happen to objects and people in the image.

What caused the events portrayed in the image?

3. Pose the question: "Are floods an act of God?" explaining that this is not to be taken literally but to mean that floods are unavoidable/uncontrollable acts of nature.

Students then have 5 minutes to write their responses, which are then sealed in an envelope and handed in.

4. Explain the rationale of the unit.

"Using the example of floods we are going to consider how the behaviour of individuals and groups of people impacts on the environment, and consider how changes to this behaviour could affect the future of our environment."

This is extremely important as students need to have an appreciation of the bigger picture from the outset if the enquiry is to be effective! The reason that they have handed in sealed responses is because this is the key question that they will be tackling over the next 4 lessons, at the end of which they will be asked to unseal their envelopes and consider changes that may or may not have occurred to their viewpoints.

Main activity

1. Photocopy Resource Sheet 1 for the class.
2. Cut out the statements and put each set into an envelope.
3. Divide the class into pairs or small groups and then hand out the envelopes.
4. Students then need to use the statements from the envelope to solve the mystery.
Mrs McCormack is a fictional character and the statements refer to a fictional flood, individual teachers should adapt the statements to suit the flood event they are using.

There is no right or wrong answer. What the teacher should look for is the quality of synthesis of information; what is the implication of each statement and how does it help to solve the mystery? Success depends on co-operative group work in which productive learning and social relationships are fostered.

NB: Further questions beyond that of the central question can be created to extend the activity.

For further guidance on mysteries refer to Leat, D. (1998) Thinking Through Geography. Chris Kington Publishing.

Plenary:

1. Photocopy Resource Sheet 2 for the class.
2. Show students a copy of Resource Sheet 2.
This implies that floods are naturally occurring events that without human interaction are not disastrous. Only when floods and humans interact will a disaster occur. Using information from Lesson 1, suggest what has brought people into contact with floods and how their behaviour accentuated the risk of flood disasters. This could be finished as a homework task with students annotating their own copies of Resource Sheet 2.