

THIS EARTH DAY TELL A DIFFERENT KIND OF STORY, ONE WITH A DIFFERENT KIND OF MESSAGE—

HOPE.

I invite you this Earth Day, to help inspire hope in our kids! ***A World Worth Imagining*** by Sue Holloway & Amanda Clark, can help you do that. It can simply be a story-- a vision, that you share, or a jumping off point for discussions, activities and idea sharing.

I have compiled and created some activities and lesson plans that you are welcome to use. They can be adapted for all ages, and can be used for your homeschool, classroom, family and friends. Everyone dreams of a future they can look forward to!

You can mix and match activities to suit your timeframe, resources, and space. The possibilities are endless. If your time is limited, I suggest reading ***A World Worth Imagining***, followed by one of the **Visioning Our Future** activities and closing with an **Honouring The Earth** activity. I would definitely include a **Connecting To The Wonder** activity if I had the time and outdoor space!

Feel free to contact me with any questions: elementofadventure@yahoo.com or visit: www.aworldworthimagining.com.

THE ACTIVITIES

Connecting To The Wonder

- Camera
- Lost Worlds
- Earth Walks
- Forest Floor

Visioning Our Future

- Imagine That
- Council of All Beings

Earth Honouring

- My Gifts To All
- Earth Mandalas
- Hope Flags

CONNECTING TO THE WONDER

If you have access to the outdoors and the time, include in your program an activity to help participants rediscover the wonder of the natural world. I believe it is this sense of awe and wonder that grows into compassion, respect and stewardship. These activities help nurture our connection to the earth and help set the mood for the rest of the lesson.

CAMERA

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all

TIME: 20 minutes

SUPPLIES: none

SET-UP: outdoors (forest, park, green space)

This activity encourages participants to view the natural world from different perspectives.

In pairs, one participant is the photographer, and the other plays the role of the camera. The camera closes his/her eyes, as the photographer guides them around in search of beautiful and interesting pictures. When the photographers see something they like, they get in position and point the camera's lens (eyes) at their subject. To take the picture, the photographer presses the shutter button, (taps the camera's shoulder), to open the lens and a second tap, a few seconds later, closes the shutter.

It is important the camera keeps its eyes closed between pictures so that the 3- 5 second "exposure" will have the impact of surprise.

Encourage the photographers to be creative in choosing and framing pictures. Encourage them to 'shoot" from different angles and perspectives. The photographers can also prepare their cameras in advance by telling them which lens they will be using. E.g. close up lens, wide angle lens, telephoto lens.

After the photographers have taken three pictures, the pairs change roles. To close, gather together to discuss favourite shots.

LOST WORLDS

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all

TIME: 20 minutes

SUPPLIES: Each participant needs- 1 meter long string, magnifying lens, 7 toothpicks

SET-UP: outdoors (forest, park, green space). In advance find your own world and mark the 7 wonders (as described below)

“Lost worlds” is an activity that has participants looking at the small and amazing things in the natural world.

“I was out for a walk last night and you will not believe this, but I found a lost world! It is so amazing! There are tiny toadstools that the people eat for food, magic carpets they fly on and a dungeon for their unwanted guests. Do you want to come see it? You will need your explorer’s kits. By the way, the only way to explore my planet is on your hands and knees with a magnifying glass. Let’s go!”

Give each participant an explorer’s kit and head out to your lost planet. This is a place you found earlier, that looks super cool. It could be a mossy stump, a rotten log, even a rocky crevice. You have placed your string in a circle to mark the boundary of your planet. You have also used the toothpicks to mark the 7 wonders of your world. Be creative in defining the different places. Be sure to name your world.

After you have given your tour, send the explorers off to find their own world. Using their magnifying glass, string and toothpicks, participants explore and discover the different wonders of their worlds. When folks are done, encourage them to go on interplanetary tours.

EARTH WALKS

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: 10 & up

TIME: 10-20 minutes

SUPPLIES: none

SET-UP: outdoors (forest, park, green space)

“*Earthwalks*” are a means to quiet the mind, expand one’s awareness and connect with the earth. They are silent activities and can take place on any forest trail. They can be used to get to a new destination for the rest of your program to take place. A couple of my favourites are:

Barefoot walk—Taking off your shoes instantly changes your view of the world. After a few minutes of awkwardness, folks relax a little, and feel connected to the earth. As barefoot walking is new to many, talk to the group about common sense. Ask them to walk slowly and attentively, paying attention to their feet and each new sensation. If they see something interesting along the way, encourage them to stop and have a look.

Five Steps Walk- At the beginning of the walk, invite the participants to close their eyes and listen to the sounds all around. After a minute, ask folks to open their eyes and look all around. Encourage them to really look. What is above and below and beside them? What does the air smell like? What does it taste like?

The walk proceeds by participants taking 5 steps, stopping and really looking around; paying attention again to using all the senses. They take another 5 steps, stop, and look around and so on. The group continues on this way, noticing all that can happen and change in 5 steps.

FOREST FLOOR ACTIVITY

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all

TIME: 10 to 20 minutes

SUPPLIES: none

SET-UP: forest

Invite the group to become a part of the forest. “We are going to pretend we are clumps of moss, branches that have fallen or even a rotten log, and rest here on the forest floor. We will let our bodies melt into the earth.”

Explain to the group that this is a silent activity and that you will give a signal when it is time to get up. Send each person along the trail to find a special place to lie down. Participants are asked to cover themselves in grass, branches, and leaves that are found lying on the forest floor. You might need to help them a bit with the finishing touches.

Once everyone is nestled in (you too), lie there and be one with the earth. Watch the leaves dancing, the birds overhead, the bugs flying around etc.. As the leader, pay attention to when folks start to get fidgety and talking to get a sense of when to end the activity. Gather again as a group and ask each participant to describe their experience.

VISIONING OUR FUTURE

IMAGINE THAT

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all

TIME: 40 to 60 minutes

SUPPLIES: markers, flipchart paper, ***A World Worth Imagining*** book

SET-UP: none

After reading ***A World Worth Imagining***, invite participants to talk about the kind of world they believe is worth imagining. The questions you choose and the depth of the conversation will vary with the ages of the group. With the younger kids, it could be as simple as reading the book, talking about what they imagine, and having them draw a picture of some part of their vision. You might also create a group poem. With the older kids and adults, here are some other ideas to consider:

Break into groups of 4 to 6. Ask the participants to discuss what their ideal world would be like. What would it look like, sound like, feel like? How would the people interact with the animals and the earth? How would the people treat each other, solve conflicts, and make decisions? What about different religions, wealth, ethnic backgrounds? How is your vision different or similar to that in the book?

To add an extra dimension to **Imagine That**, you could include aspects of the **Council of All Beings** activity. To do this, come prepared with 5 different masks, one to represent each of the following: water, forests, animals, birds, and land (you can add more if you like). Choose 5 participants to wear the masks. In the visioning discussion, the masked participants are asked to speak only on behalf of who or what they represent. For example, if the water had a voice, consider what would its vision of an ideal world look like? How would it respond to the ideas presented.

Option 1: As the group discusses and agrees on the different aspects of their ideal world, have them add images and words to a piece of flipchart paper to depict their visions.

Option 2: After the group has discussed the different aspects of their ideal world, ask them to create rap song, poem*, skit or a human sculpture** to present their vision to the larger group.

** Group Poems are a fun way to share your vision of an ideal world. There are many styles you can use, but my favourite are Haiku and Cinquain. In both styles, start by choosing the topic, in this case, a world worth imagining, and then brainstorming different words and phrases about that topic.*

HAIKU

A **Haiku** consists of 3 lines and 17 syllables.

Each line has a set number of syllables see below:

- **Line 1** – 5 syllables
- **Line 2** – 7 syllables
- **Line 3** – 5 syllables

green lands and blue seas
veiled in wisps of white clouds –
our unique planet

In a Haiku, try to use words sensory words that describe your vision. What does it sound like, smell like, taste like etc..

CINQUAIN

There are many different ways to write a **Cinquain** poem. Below is the traditional way and an adaptation.

Line 1: Title in 2 syllables (or words)

Line 2: Description of the title in 4 syllables (or words)

Line 3: Description of action in 6 syllables (or words)

Line 4: Description of a feeling in 8 syllables (or words)

Line 5: Another word for the title in 2 syllables (or words)

Ancient
mother of all
wearing a dress of green
and as powerful as a
queen
The earth

***The human sculpture asks group members to create a visual representation of the vision using all the bodies in their group. There can be moving parts and sounds if folks want.*

After 30-40 minutes, gather the groups to share their ideas. Discuss how the world already reflects their vision as well as areas that are different. What would need to happen to make the world reflect their vision? How might they affect change?

Extension: Ask participants to choose an aspect of their vision that is particularly important or of interest to them. They can research and explore that aspect in more depth individually or in groups. Consider how does it exist now. What would need to change for it to change? What actions can individuals take to affect this change and move towards the vision?

COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS (ADAPTED)

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: 10 & up

TIME: 1 to 2 hours

SUPPLIES: markers, flipchart paper, ***A World Worth Imagining***, mask making materials

SET-UP: none

After reading ***A World Worth Imagining***, explain that you are going to explore a world worth imagining from the perspective of all beings.

What does a mountain wish for? A wolf? A cow? A river? We can't know for sure, but when we tap into our empathy and creativity, we can imagine. We can also envision what we would want if we were that mountain or cow. What would make our world worth imagining?

The Council of All Beings is a great activity for helping participants make connections and build reverence. Participants “become” a being or part of nature and share the lives, concerns, hopes and wisdom of their being in a council.

Note that this Council of All Beings is modified from the book “Thinking Like a Mountain: Toward a Council of All Beings” by Joanna Macy, Arne Naess, John Seed and Pat Fleming.

Here's how it works:

1. Explain the entire premise before beginning, so students know what is going to happen. Emphasize that silence (in between the spoken comments of council members) is an important part of the sanctity of the council.
2. Invite students to sit or lie down so they are comfortable. Ask them to close their eyes and let the image of an animal (human or nonhuman), or part of nature or landscape, come to them in their imaginations. Remind them not to force themselves to think about a certain animal or part of nature, but rather to let the being visit them in their thoughts.
3. Ask the students to “become” the being who has visited them in their imaginations. Direct them to feel themselves turning into this animal or part of nature (such as a cloud, mountain, tree, wolf, spider or another human). Ask them: “What is happening to me as this being? How do I feel? What is my life like? My days? My nights? My interactions with other beings? With my environment? What do I want? What do I have to say? What would my ideal world include? What would I like to tell people? What wisdom do I have as this being?” Remind them to listen inside themselves for the answers.

4. After giving students some time to really “become” their being, bring the art supplies into the center of the circle and invite students to open their eyes and make a mask, silently, to represent themselves as this being. The mask does not have to look like the being, as long as it feels like it is representative. Some participants will be tempted to spend a long time on their mask. Remind them that the mask is only a representation, and give five and one-minute warnings for finishing the mask.
5. When all have finished their masks, form the council.
6. One by one, beings should introduce themselves and say what their lives are like, who they are and how they spend their time. After each being speaks, the council should respond by saying, “We hear you, ____ (name of being).”
7. Ask the beings to speak again, this time telling the council what is happening to them, including what people have done to them, what they would like to say to people and what would their ideal world look like. Once again, the rest of the group responds by saying, “We hear you, ____ (name of being).”
8. After each being has spoken again, ask them to talk once more, sharing whatever wisdom, knowledge or gifts they have to offer, and what they might teach people who are willing to listen. The group responds by saying, “We thank you, ____ (name of being).”
9. Finally, after each being has spoken for the last time, ask participants to remove their masks one by one. As each of them takes off the mask, invite them to turn their masks toward themselves and make a small promise to change one aspect of their lives to help manifest their being’s world worth imagining.
10. The council ends when you say something like “These promises made shall not be broken. We give thanks to the beings that have come together today to share their feelings, dreams, hopes and wisdom.”

EARTH HONOURING ACTIVITIES

Earth Honouring activities can be used to create a ceremony of sorts to celebrate hope, honour the earth and to make a commitment to working towards the vision.

EARTH POLE

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all ages

TIME: 20 minutes

SUPPLIES: personal symbolic items, wire, ***A World Worth Imagining***

SET-UP: find a special location outside, like a tree, a pole, a boulder or inside you could make a special spot in the corner. Use some nice fabric, place a candle, etc.

At Forest School we have a special pole that we gather around every year on Earth Day. It is here, we recommit annually to being guardians of the earth, and to working towards creating a better world. Each person is asked to bring something from nature that will symbolize this commitment. It might be a special stone, shell, pinecone, etc. After reading ***A World Worth Imagining***, participants close their eyes, holding the item in their hands. The group is asked to imagine, (in their minds eye), what a world worth imagining would look like. With their eyes closed and silent, they are invited to look around at the forests, towns, waters, and people and imagine. They are directed to hold this vision and what it feels like and direct it (again, in the minds eye, or energetically), into their item. The group recites:

“I swear I will not dishonour my soul with hatred, but offer myself humbly as a guardian of nature, a healer of misery, as a messenger of wonder, as an architect of peace.”

The item is then attached to the pole by wire, or placed around the base.

MY GIFT TO ALL

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all ages

TIME: 15 minutes

SUPPLIES: none

SET-UP: none

Lead the group to an open space, and ask them to each find a place to sit on their own. They should be comfortable and not in a circle. This is a silent activity for the group.

They only need to be able to hear the voice of the facilitator, who should speak slowly, pausing for several seconds between sentences. Explain that you are going to invite them to really feel where they are now. Ask them to close their eyes and focus on their sense of hearing. Listen to the sounds far away and those up close. Listen to the wind in the trees, the birds and the bugs, etc. After 1 or 2 minutes, invite them now to focus on their sense of touch. Feel the ground beneath you and the sky above you. Feel your body. Start with your toes... and now feet. Then move up to your ankles... (And so on, all the way up the body). Feel the top of your head and its connection with the vast sky above you. Lastly invite the participants to open their eyes and look around, focusing on their sense of sight. Look at the colours, shadows, vastness etc. Now, with all the senses heightened, feel your connection to this earth, to these trees, to this sky..."

Sitting quietly, ask the participants to continue to feel this connection, and to think about what gift they can offer to create a better world. What skill or quality do they have that they could offer in the service of the planet? These could be many different things-- compassion, knowledge, money, art, organizational skills, friendship, etc. After everyone has identified something, ask them to find a natural object to symbolize their gift and to join back up in a circle.

Take turns saying, "I offer my _____ in service to creating a world worth imagining." As they do this, each person places their item on the ground, all of them forming a circle.

EARTH MANDALA

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all ages

TIME: 20 minutes to 1 hour

SUPPLIES: none

SET-UP: none

A mandala is a geometric figure or shape that in both Hinduism and Buddhism represents the universe. Sometimes mandalas are drawn, painted or made of coloured sand. But they can really be created from anything – and nature provides an abundance of inspiration for the creation of a beautiful cosmic diagram.

Creating an earth mandala can be a powerful ritual that allows participants to deeply connect to the beauty and abundance of nature. Every mandala will be entirely unique to the environment and the season. It will be a way to honour and thank the earth for all that she provides and to commit to be her guardian. If there are to be many individual mandalas, the group can start by preparing a space for their mandalas; clearing it of debris. If it is a group mandala, the facilitator can prepare the place while the others collect the supplies. A few tips to share with your group:

Let nature guide you. Don't decide beforehand what you will gather. Take your time. Follow where you the earth wants to guide you. I encourage folks to gather items that can be found on the ground. If harvesting living items be respectful, do not collect too much and ask permission from the plant, etc.

Be sure to **gather more than you think you'll need!** In order to create the sacred geometry of a mandala, you will need many similar items. Maybe 10-20 of larger items, and 30-100 of smaller ones.

To put the mandala together, begin with an item for the centre. Look at what you have collected and let it speak to you. The item for the centre should be one that will symbolize, for you, your commitment towards creating a world worth imagining. From here you start to create geometrical patterns that move from the inside out. If you are working in a group, be in silence, move around each other and be aware of how easily you can come together and create something beautiful without words and formal direction. Continue to move outwards allowing nature to express her beauty and energy in your creation. If working in a group, each member chooses their individual symbolic item and places them around the perimeter.



HOPE FLAGS

PARTICIPANTS: any number

AGES: all ages

TIME: 30 minutes

SUPPLIES: paper or fabric, scissors, glue, rope

SET-UP: none

These flags come from the Tibetan tradition of the prayer flag. Prayer flags are pieces of colored cloth with symbols and text that are meant to promote peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom. It is believed that the ancient Buddhist prayers, mantras and powerful symbols displayed on them produce a spiritual vibration that is activated and carried by the wind across the countryside. All beings that are touched by the wind are uplifted and a little happier. The silent prayers are blessings spoken on the breath of nature.

Hope flags are meant to be used in a similar way. Flags can be created in different ways, using different mediums. What is important is the intention that goes into them. The creator should hold their wishes, hopes, visions and prayers for a world worth imagining in their hearts while making their flag.

This can be a group project, each making different flags for the string; or an individual project, with people making a number of their own flags. Once they are complete, the flags are attached to a rope, and hung in a thoughtful location. The flags can be made of fabric that is sewn or glued, or of paper.

To make a flag. Cut out a basic triangle or rectangle shape out of cardstock or felt, to make the base of the flag. Provide the group with paper/fabric of various colours and patterns. Participants cut out different shapes and sizes and glue/sew them onto their base flag. They can overlap, or fit like a jigsaw. At the end, trim around the base flag to remove any extra flaps of paper. Flags can be sewn or stapled along a rope and hung in a special place to blow in the wind.

