

EDUCATORS' GUIDE TO THE YPAC CREATIVE BOOK

How to include climate change meaningfully
and holistically in your classroom and embed
it across the whole school

THIS GUIDE

- Presents a brief 'setting the scene' review of research and policy developments to explain how a whole school approach to climate change is both necessary and possible (p.2).
- Takes you through ways of initiating a whole school approach by getting your school leadership and colleagues on board, so that educators working across subjects can teach on climate change effectively and confidently (p.3).
- Presents spark ideas and activities for working with the YPAC creative book (pp.4-8). These are designed to be adaptable to different year levels, subjects, and curricular contexts, and will easily ignite your own ideas and variations. Whilst we've written this with secondary schools in mind, this guide is easy to adapt to a primary school setting.

In late 2022, the Young People at a Crossroads (YPAC) project team launched a creative book, **'Young People at a Crossroads: Stories of Climate Education, Action and Adaptation from around the world'**.

We're incredibly proud of that book, but we want to go further in supporting educators to use the book in teaching and engaging students on climate change. So, if you're an educator, then this guide is for you!

The 'spark ideas' and activities in this guide are just a starting point. We hope these ideas will generate more! If you've developed your own resource from the YPAC book we'd love to hear about it. Please tweet us [@YPX_manc_melb](https://twitter.com/YPX_manc_melb).

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SETTING THE SCENE

With anxiety on the rise during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, young people's mental health is a priority area for many professionals, including educators. Added to this, climate grief and eco-anxiety are just two terms developed in response to the mental health impacts of climate and ecological breakdown.

Many teachers are themselves worried about climate change, and their wellbeing is under pressure from a highly demanding job. So, is it really a good idea for teachers and students to be delving into the highly emotional (and incredibly huge and complex) issue of climate change?

Absolutely. Not only can it support teacher and student wellbeing, but changes to curricula around the world mean that teaching on climate change is a requirement in many contexts. Like all sciences, climate change is a complex issue, with new research and terminology being generated all the time. This presents an opportunity to develop progressive curricula.

As we write in the YPAC creative book (p.80), framing climate change as a safeguarding issue, making space to talk, and holding conversations with sensitivity and respect are three ways that can help to soften eco-anxiety in students and teachers alike.

While climate change is often framed as a controversial and political issue, substantial weight should be given to the perspectives of young people bolstered by intergenerational and intercultural conversations.

The context of these challenges are worth further exploration, and so if you wish to dig deeper, you can read our blog: "[Creative, sensitive and grounded in diverse perspectives: Why we need inclusive climate change education](#)".

Many young people have been vocal about their climate concerns in recent years, so we know that young people have important ideas. But which young people are we speaking to? Whilst acknowledging that all young people have important and diverse perspectives to share, the YPAC project set out to speak to young people from families with experiences of migration to learn from their lived experiences in different countries. These unique perspectives are presented in the YPAC creative book.

Through interviews, focus groups, and young people's own interviews with parents, YPAC uncovered **10 key messages for educators** as well as diverse perspectives from young people that can feed into **hopeful, story-based teaching on climate change that learns from diverse contexts**.

Through beautiful illustrations by Maisy Summer (some of which are shown in this guide), the book also showcases the value of creative responses to climate change.



INITIATING AND TAKING A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

Why take a whole school approach to climate education?

- **It will help your teaching and confidence!**
 - ▶ *With the climate change situation changing so rapidly and much of it feeling new, approaching it collectively helps to give confidence and assistance to 'keep up'. It can also help you navigate this potentially controversial space.*
- **It will help the wellbeing of teachers and students!**
 - ▶ *Let's face it: climate change is an existential crisis. Getting your colleagues to also acknowledge and include it in their teaching and learning means you won't feel so alone.*
 - ▶ *Including climate change across the curriculum shows the school community that you care about this issue that the students also care about so deeply, and that is validating for them and spurs on hope.*
- **It's more meaningful!**
 - ▶ *Climate change is all encompassing, and every facet of it is interconnected so why should it only be taught in one or two areas of the curriculum?*
 - ▶ *Embedding and integrating it across the curriculum ensures that every student gets the opportunity to learn scientific-based and empowering knowledge.*

How can you initiate a whole school approach?

Approach your leadership team to get their support - you might like to base the conversation around the common value of wellbeing.



Approach one or more colleagues - ask if they'd like to collaborate on a common 'spark idea' (see below, or your own idea based on the YPAC book).

Embed climate action in your school's rhythms and curriculum - the whole school could include a focus on climate change in term one each year; or climate change and environment could become the main focus for year 7 or year 9 every single year. You could also commit to marking certain days or weeks, e.g. **School Tree Day**, **National Tree Week**, or **Earth Hour**.

What else can you do to build climate concern into the culture of your school?

- ▶ *Make genuine opportunities for student voice, agency, and participation - for example, you could support a student-led action team; or invite students onto your School Council.*
- ▶ *Add "sustainability" as a standing item to your staff meeting agenda and school newsletter - share updates, tips, wins, requests etc.*
- ▶ *Sign your school up to a sustainability or net zero program - for example, **Eco Schools** in the UK or **Resource Smart Schools** in Victoria, Australia.*

SPARK IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

A cross curricular approach

We now show some examples of how the content in the YPAC creative book can be linked to different curricula, using the UK and Victoria (Australia) curricula as examples.

Teachers are creative people. It's a key part of the job. So, these ideas are not prescriptive, and they are certainly not exhaustive. Rather, they offer 'sparks' that can be developed using your own expertise and the context of your school community.

If your subject area doesn't appear in the table below, why not think together with colleagues to come up with your own ideas?

The '**Open book icon**' shows where you will find content.



The '**Lightbulb icon**' gives you a spark idea to work with.







The '**Spade icon**' gives you a way of digging deeper into the spark idea.



Grab some colleagues and plan together!

Subject	Curricula links	Context and ideas
Civics & Citizenship (1)	<p>UK: The need for mutual respect and understanding in diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK.</p> <p>Victoria: Values of freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality with regards to different cultural, religious and/or social groups.</p>	<p> Rahma and Sahail talk about how their families find grounds for environmental care in their Islamic faith (pp.48-49).</p> <p> Noyesha's reflection discusses the significance of the Banyan tree for Hindus in Western parts of India (pp.74-75).</p> <p> What place does care for the natural world hold in different religions and faith practices? Students could conduct peer-peer interviews by asking students of different faiths to share about this.</p> <p> Write a new Ten Commandments for all faiths and none with the natural world at the centre.</p>
Civics & Citizenship (2)	<p>UK: The different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of their community.</p> <p>Victoria: How shared beliefs and values work together to achieve their goals and plan for action including global citizenship.</p>	<p> Young people share a range of activities they have been involved in, from campaigning to get plastic bottles banned or to reduce air pollution outside their school (p. 23 and p. 48), to setting up an online campaign on reducing meat consumption (Rei's reflection, pp. 40-43).</p> <p> Look at the 'People's Climate Strategy' image on p.36 of the creative book, and what young people have said about this image on p.35 and p.76. Discuss your responses to the image and quotes.</p> <p> If you were to hold a 'People's Climate Strategy' for the community in your school, who would you invite and why? How would you ensure all voices were heard? Write down your ideas.</p>

<p>RSE & Health (PSHE), HPE</p>	<p>UK: The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality and that everyone is unique and equal.</p> <p>Victoria: Behaviours that demonstrate sensitivity to individual, social and cultural differences.</p>	<p> Young people reflect on the importance of speaking to people in places that are undergoing environmental change to hear their perspectives (pp.66-67). For example, Rebecca recommends speaking to people in villages like her father's in Nigeria.</p> <p> Read Rebecca's quote on p.67 and then Rebecca and Edward's reflection on pp.24-25. What reasons are given for why the environment is changing in Ozu Abam?</p> <p> In your class, share all the places around the world where you have family connections. If you could interview people living in those places about climate change, what would you ask them and why?</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>UK: UK and global food supply, security and sustainability.</p> <p>Victoria: Challenges in feeding the current and projected populations of Australia and the world, and responses to these challenges.</p>	<p> Some young people point out the threat of food shortages in the countries their families have migrated from (Paula, p.72; Siobhan, p.67). Others, like Haripriya (pp.68-70), share ways they are reducing food waste at home.</p> <p> In small groups, come up with lists of the food you consumed in the last 24 hours. Pick some food types and research what resources (e.g. land, water, fuel for transport) were required to produce this and get it to you.</p> <p> Keep a food diary for one week and compare all the places your food has travelled from. How does this change from season to season? Is there anything that you eat regularly that doesn't ever grow in the country where you live?</p>
<p>Art & Design, Visual Arts</p>	<p>UK: The ways in which meanings, ideas and intentions can be communicated through visual and tactile language, using formal elements.</p> <p>Victoria: Explore practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts and themes in art works.</p>	<p> The creative book contains a series of original and beautiful illustrations prompted by young people's reflections. Which illustration do you find the most stimulating and why?</p> <p> Pick one image from the book and read the caption below it. Spend a few minutes writing a response to the image and the caption. What jumped out to you? What further questions do you have about the image and caption?</p> <p> On p. 35, Saher observes that 'Looking at a picture you think about it more... you enjoy it more by drawing it and looking at it.' Try this out by drawing your own response to one of the images or quotes in the YPAC book.</p>
<p>English</p>	<p>UK: Using language imaginatively and creatively; using information provided by others to write in different forms.</p> <p>Victoria: Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts.</p>	<p> Trees feature prominently in young people and parents' concern for the environment and how it is changing. Trees can have a symbolic power to convey emotional responses to nature. Some examples in the YPAC book are the Vat Purnima tree being commemorated (pp.74-75), the trees surrounding the children learning (pp.24-25), the trees being planted (pp.52-53 and on the book cover), and the trees being cut down for charcoal (pp.56-58).</p> <p> If trees could speak, what would they say? Write a creative piece of writing about one of the trees in the book.</p> <p> Adapt your creative writing into a performance piece and perform it. How did it feel to speak the words of the tree out loud?</p>

SPARK ACTIVITIES

Plastics, plastics everywhere

"In my opinion, westernised countries like Australia can learn from Sierra Leone. Everything in Australia is covered in plastic and it's our job to make a change and make this world better for ourselves, our children, and their children." (Akos, p. 79).

"The first thing that comes to mind is there were no plastic bags [...] we had woven bags, that we would take shopping and we just brought the shopping back, and we would reuse those bags. But they were very strong bags, they were sort of woven out of either palmyra leaves or sometimes plastic, but I think that came later." (Haripriya's mother, p. 68).

To get started, read either Akos' (pp.78-79) or Haripriya's (pp.68-70) reflections in the creative book.



Subject	Activities and questions to get started
Art	Research works of art made from recycled, repurposed or upcycled plastic or other waste material. How many of these works of art communicate messages about waste itself? What could you create out of clean, sanitised and safe plastic waste to highlight excess waste and encourage changes in your school canteen?
Chemistry	How are plastics made? What are plastic-free alternatives like for our health and that of the planet? Examine the packaging in your school's canteen to see what it is composed of, and what the implications are.
Design and Technology	Examine your school's canteen menu and packaging. How could you redesign the menu, packaging, and/or systems, to go plastic-free or, even better, waste-free?
English	Create persuasive texts (such as letters, petition, speech, posters) to convince people to make changes to your school canteen. Some ideas are: a text to convince the canteen contractor to change their packaging; a text to convince school leadership to change the contract or tender for the canteen provider; a text to convince students to make changes to what they order.
Geography	Examine food packaging around the world and across time. What could we learn and implement here in our country? How have plastics spread across the world?
Maths & Science	Calculate how much waste your school's canteen produces each day. How much is that per student? How many emissions would that create? How much could be redirected through recycling and composting? By how much would that reduce your school's emissions?

What is climate justice?

"Those who sell this charcoal then survive off its trade, making it their source of income. It's all they know. They don't know about the importance of preserving trees and the consequences of deforestation. For the need of preservation, what alternative can the charcoal burners find if they are told to stop their livelihood?" (Siobhan's mum, p.57).

"One of the main reasons why people in low-income countries are struggling to care for the environment is because it is expensive, and they just simply cannot afford to live ethically and sustainably." (Emaan, p.47).

To get started, read "How young people understand climate justice" (pp.54-55), and either Siobhan's reflection (pp. 56-58) or Emaan's reflection (pp. 46-47).



Subject	Activities and questions to get started
Drama or English	Nations which have historically contributed the least to climate change are taking countries such as the UK and Australia to court. They demand to be compensated for the increasing number of environmental and social problems. Imagine that those who have contributed their thoughts and stories in the book have been called to testify and make the case for compensation. How might the drama play out in a courtroom?
Economics	To what extent is economic sustainability limited by environmental sustainability? Discuss this statement with reference to resource insecurity; for example, Siobhan's mum's experience of people in Zambia being forced to cut down trees in order to make a living.
Geography & Maths	There are a number of different ways of calculating greenhouse gas emissions from different countries. This 'Our World In Data' page looks at emissions in total over history, not just today: ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2 . Use the data on the charts to compare historical emissions between the UK, Australia and the countries from which the YPAC families migrated from or through (see p.12, and the maps on pp. 14-17). For instance, you could calculate how many times Australia has contributed to global CO2 emissions compared to Venezuela.
Philosophy & Religious Education	How do different faiths and cultures view climate change and environmental destruction as ethical and social justice issues? Think about the different places and people in the YPAC book. Look into examples from countries such as New Zealand (Aotearoa) and India where aspects of the environment have been granted legal rights and status such as are usually granted only to humans.
History	Choose one of the countries that the YPAC young people's families migrated from or to (see the full list of countries on p.12). How has colonisation impacted on the resource profile of that country (e.g. was a particular resource exploited by a colonial power, or did it benefit from a resource from another country)? Are there any ways that the ongoing effects of colonisation are seen in the way that climate change is affecting that country or hindering that country's ability to adapt?

Whose responsibility is it, anyway?

"I used to wonder why the City Council weren't doing their work and collecting the rubbish. I saw a lot of kids eating lollies and throwing wrappers on the streets. I then realised that there had to be a change. I turned to my friends, and we all had a deep discussion about whose responsibility it was to maintain a clean environment. Us or the City Council?" (Stephen's mum, p.51).

"The interview also highlighted the need for educating the village residents about climate change to create more awareness. This will help them to take more action to bring the impact of the worsening climate situation to

the governors of the area who could in turn create good governance." (Rebecca's dad, p.25).

To get started, read "What young people want from their leaders" (pp.44-45), and Stephen's reflection (pp.50-53).



Subject	Activities and questions to get started
Design & Technology (Textiles & Materials)	Research the recovery and recycling of various textiles and materials. Which textiles are most easily recycled? Which are the least? Repurpose old clothes to create a new item of clothing.
Economics	What is meant by the term "circular economy"? What role could government, businesses, and individuals play in creating a circular economy, and how do you think these roles should be balanced? What are the costs of sending certain items to landfill versus keeping them in a circular economy?
English	Complete the story that Stephen tells from his Mum's perspective in his project book reflection (pp.50-51): what happened next for Eunice and friends?
Geography	Think about how people's and governments' actions in one place impact on other places. How might consumer decisions about what clothing or food to buy or boycott in relatively affluent countries affect the livelihoods of people involved in the production of those goods? How might one country's refusal to process waste from another country impact on waste policies in the country that was used to sending waste overseas?
History	How has the environment (in particular waterways and forests) been viewed by Western societies over time? How have waterways been used, what have been the implications, and what laws have changed as a result?
Law & Ethics	Who is (or should be) responsible for packaging after it's been used? The company that made it, the company that used it to package its own goods, the individual, or the government? Should fast food outlets print customer names on packaging so individuals can be prosecuted for littering?
Philosophy	What emotions are more and less motivating to encourage people and communities to change what they do in response to climate change? Think in particular about guilt, fear, anger, shame, hope, inspiration, love and empathy.
Politics	Examine the different levels of government in the place where you live. How does this vary across different countries? Determine what kinds of actions each level of government is responsible for, or capable of, with regards to climate mitigation and adaptation. How can this information be shared with the community and constituents? What are we citizens responsible for?