

E-lesson inspirations

These are not lesson plans; there is no prescribed sequence of steps. Instead, you can pick and mix activities depending on your specific teaching situation and your lesson aims. The activities are built around a video clip and they all focus on global issues. Decide if your students should watch out of class or in class, and if you want them to watch the whole video, or just a section. You can of course listen/watch first and be inspired to come up with your own ideas!

Title: Pale blue dot

Internet source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p86BPM1GV8M>

Overview: This clip shows our home, planet Earth, from a cosmic perspective. The narrator, Carl Sagan, was a famous astronomer and science fiction writer.

Topic: identity, change of perspective, the cosmos

Level / context: intermediate to advanced

Duration: 3.32 min

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

'Telepathy' Tell your students that they can now try an experiment in telepathy: they are asked to read your mind. 1/ Ask them to guess the colour you're thinking of (think 'blue'). 2/ Ask them which one of four punctuation marks you're thinking of: *comma, dot, hyphen, quotation mark* (think 'dot'). 3/ Ask them to guess which one-syllable adjective beginning with 'p' is on your mind (think 'pale'). Then tell them that you will now watch a clip about a 'pale blue dot'. Ask them to guess what it might be about.

Note: the tone of this activity should be fun and light.

'Mystery X' Ask your students to think of what 'X' might stand for in the following sentence: "X is a humbling and character-building experience. " You might need to help with language. Ask them to think of the most humbling and character-building experience that they have had.

'Home Image' Tell your students that you will ask them to form a mental image, to see something with their mind's eye. Ask them to close their eyes and to picture: 'home'. Ask them to get hold of the first image, and bring it into sharp focus. Then they open their eyes and give a description of their home image in pairs.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

'Group Memory' Drawing on the memory of the whole class/group, ask your students to recall all the inhabitants of planet Earth that were mentioned. Make a list on the board – then listen again and see which ones were left out. (e.g. *corrupt politician, teacher of morals, hero and coward, hopeful child, creator and destroyer of civilization, every young couple in love, inventor and explorer, superstar, supreme leader, saint and sinner*).

'Key lexis' Check understanding of key vocabulary, language chunks. E.g. *vantage point, vast, privileged position, delusion, obscure, to harbour life, humble, humbling experience, character-building experience*

'Books & Films' Ask your students to think of a book they've read or a film they've seen that the clip makes them think of. What was the title and when did they read it / see it? How did they like it? In their view, what was the message? Ask them to write about it formulating their ideas in one paragraph. They then read out and comment on each other's paragraphs in groups.

'Change of perspective' The clip changes our normal perspective on planet Earth. By making outer space our vantage point, it allows us to look at our planetary home from the outside, too see it with the eyes of a space traveller. Ask your students if they can recall an experience that enabled them to see something familiar with fresh eyes. E.g. their family, home, hometown, country, best friend. What made their perspective change? What was their new vantage point? What can we learn from these experiences?