

LET'S FIND OUT "THE LETTER FROM THE EARTH" THROUGH THE TALE
"UNDER THE LOCUST TREE"



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CONEGUEM “LA CARTA DE LA TERRA” AMB EL CONTE “SOTA L’ACÀCIA”

On a marble board which is to be found at the Hall of the Worldwide Bank, in Washington, one can read out r: *Our dream is a world free of poverty*. It is a great wish with nice words, which, by now, are half way to turn out true.

In September 2015 all the states which compound the UN agreed upon a plan with 17 objectives for a sustainable development. They compromised to get to 2030 with dramatic improvements in terms of poverty eradication, decrease on child mortality, universal primary education for all, among other environmental aspects which involve all of us in order to build up a better world.

Following this ideal of change in social and environmental relations nowadays and with the certainty that we can make our planet a place where everyone has the same opportunities, without economic, cultural or educational inequality. A better world where everyone is happy. The group of teachers who are part of the project **Implica’t+ amb la Carta de la Terra**¹ have elaborated a set of materials to be worked in class which can be downloaded from the following website:

<http://www.xtec.cat/~mlluelle/implicat/>.

One of the documents is the tale ‘Under the Locust Tree’², a tale about Fina, an eleven-year-old girl who has a wealthy life. The story takes place during the last days at school and her emotions fly from her role at the school play, the reading of a set of letters sent by her father from the Antarctica and the horizon of a coming summer. It all seems simple and plain, yet when she meets a village newcomer under the locust tree of the park, her world perception will be put upside down. She will realize that not everyone lives the way she does. She will understand, in first person, what poverty means and how hard wars are.

Under the Locust Tree is a realistic tale, addressed to children aged 8 and above which thinks about the major thrusts of the document ‘Letter from the Earth’. The proposal we present has been designed for students of primary

¹You can check out the article published in the magazine GUIX number. 415 corresponding to June 2015

² You can also download it from the following web page:

<http://www.xtec.cat/~mlluelle/implicat/primaria/divulgacio/contes/index.htm>

higher level (cicle superior), with a few adaptations which make it possible to be used for middle level (cicle mitjà).

We have planned ten working sessions, one for each chapter. The idea is to make students read the chapter, talk about it (debate) and relate it to one of the principles from the Letter. The main goal is to revise the four major thrusts and emphasize some of the principles, especially those related to Peace, Environment or Poverty.

It is highly recommended to the teacher to act as a moderator of the conversations that will take place, making sure everyone is able to express him/herself freely.

Objectives	Key Competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express oneself clearly using oral language as a communication tool. • Create written texts in order to express thoughts and emotions from the tale. • Learn to listen and talk to classmates. • Develop a critical and creative spirit. 	Communicative, linguistic and audiovisual competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate the different ways of art expressions and the values they transmit us as altruistic and generous people. • Use drawing as a tool of expression and complaint of some social nets misbehaviours. 	Artistic and cultural competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select important and interesting information from the social nets and in the Internet. 	Information treatment and digital competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to cooperate and manage the learning. • Organize critical thought in order to give structure to the acquired knowledge provide one's own actions with coherence. 	Learning to learn competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan objectives ideas, projects and carry them out with self confidence, being critical, responsible and altruist. • Think about one's own attitudes as well as other's behaviours. 	Personal initiative and enterprising competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the knowledge on the physical world, the environment and the social-cultural reality in which we all live. 	The natural knowledge and interaction competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the Principles exposed in the document 'Letter from the Earth'. • Be able to recognize our own mistakes in order to give solutions. • Use dialogue and negotiations in order to solve conflicts constructively and positively. 	Social and citizen competence

Contents		
Concepts	Procedures	Attitudes, values, rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Letter from the Earth ✓ Richness distribution ✓ Environment conservation ✓ War conflicts ✓ Art as an element of complaint ✓ The biography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dialogue-like-reading. ✓ Use of digital resources ✓ Written creation of descriptions and opinions ✓ Art production ✓ Oral interaction in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Respect for others 'opinions ✓ Sympathy towards those who are less favoured ✓ Respect for others and personal identity ✓ Capacity to work in group ✓ decision taking and capacity to express opinions

Activities Description

ACTIVITY 1. The chocolate sweets

The teacher gives a bowl to each students and then fill them with chocolate sweets (*lacasitos*) at random. He orders them not to eat them yet. Most of them have a reasonable handful (12-15 units). However, he fills the bowl up to the top to three students whereas he gives only two units to other three students. Then there begins a dialogue about how each one feels, what they think about the fact that some have a lot while others have a few.

The conversation must get to the rumination of what we can do in order to avoid such differences and inequalities among human beings.

Then, while students are eating the sweets, the teacher takes the book 'Under the Locust Tree' and reads aloud chapter one (a bench at the park).

The session is over when the document 'Letter from the Earth' is presented. And the ninth Principle is read (Eradicate poverty as an ethic, social and environmental imperative). It is important to relate it to the tale so that students become aware of the reality surrounding them and make them think about what they, as individuals, can do to fight against inequality.

Worksheet 1. Yuri Gagarin

At the preface of 'Letter from the Earth' we can read: *"Humanity is part of a whole universe in evolution"*. In this worksheet each student will have to make some research about the life of the first Russian astronaut who went around the Earth and uttered the sentence that appears on the tale. Students will be asked to relate what Gagarin saw with the Earth's flag.

ACTIVITY 2. Wars

The second chapter and the following ones will be read by students themselves. This is the ideal one to read at once by two different voices, however, they need to rehearse-with the teacher or alone at home- before reading it aloud so that their intonation, rhythm, fluency.. make it easy for other students to understand it all. The text can be displayed on a whiteboard or photocopied for everybody. To finish with, it will be read the Sixteenth Principle from 'The Letter' (Promote the culture of tolerance, no-violence and peace) and students will comment on it in group (altogether in class).

Worksheet 2. Picasso's "Guernica"

Learn about one of the masterpieces which symbolize and denounce the horror of wars. This will allow students to think about how to solve conflicts and it will be related to the part 'f' of the sixteenth Principle (Recognize that peace is a whole created by proper relations with oneself as well as other people, cultures and lifestyles).

ACTIVITY 3. A Letter from the Antarctica

Before reading the third chapter, it is important to locate the austral continent on a map and point at some emblematic sites such as the South Pole, the highest point located at Mon Vinson or the Weddell Sea.

Later on, students will read the chapter entitled "A Letter from Antarctica" and a debate will start, focusing on the knowledge about 'The Letter' and the Fifth Principle (Protect and restore the Earth ecologic systems integrity, paying special attention to diversity and the natural processes which sustain life), this might be widened to the sixth and eighth principle if necessary.

Worksheet 3. The trophic marine chain

Students will be asked to complete the sea animals, which live in the seas surrounding the austral continent, food pyramid.

ACTIVITY 4. The stage fear

After reading the chapter “Fina’s theatre play rehearsal”, students will elaborate a list, altogether, of the different everyday situations which make us be afraid. Fears such as getting lost, dread to mice, darkness, awkward noises, etc...Then they will think about fears and how we can get over them.

Worksheet 4. Instructions-examples of how to feel fear

Parting from a fragment from the book *Historias de cronopios i de famas*³ by Julio Cortázar, students will imagine situations more or less unreal which can transmit some kind of fear or anxiety.

ACTIVITY 5. Recycling

After reading the chapter “The Scrap”, the teacher asks students if they know about the “the three Rs rule” promoted by the ecologists organization Greenpeace (Reduce when possible, Reuse as a second option and Recycle as a last option). They are explained, students make their comments and the session ends up by reading the sixth Principle from the Letter (Adopting models of production consumption and reproduction which take care of the regenerative capacities of the Earth, the human rights and the common well-being).

Worksheet 5. Let’s build up a plane by using recycled materials

Students will be sit in groups in order to promote cooperation consisting of applying the Rule *Recycling* in order to build up a toy plane.

Students will bring materials of all kinds (cans, plastic bottles, cartons, papers, clothes, etc.) then they will make the plane, take a photo of it and stick it on the space provided.

³CORTÁZAR, J. *Historias de cronopios y de famas*. Edhasa, 1998.

ACTIVITY 6. Friendship

Dialogical reading of the text followed by the activation of some references to Camelot and the Knight of the Round Table as well as Harry Potter's adventures.

Worksheet 6. The Poster

Drawing activity in which students are asked to draw and paint a poster which presents the theatre play: 'Harry Potter at King Arthur's Court'

ACTIVITY 7. Josefina Castellví

Just before reading the text, students will watch a short video⁴ where Josefina Castellví talks about her life experiences. The teacher may explain who this scientist is or ask for some research on her in the Internet. Later on, students can put in common all what they have found.

The reading is the chapter entitled 'the gifts' and is related to the fifteenth principle from the Letter (Treat all beings with respect and thoughtfulness).

Worksheet 7. The taumatrop

Making up of the classic taumatrop of a bird inside a cage, but this time representing a bird escaping from the cage because this is open.

ACTIVITY 8. Social and Economic Justice

Reading of the tenth Principle from the Letter (Make sure that all economic activities and institutions promote the human development in an equal and sustainable way) and its different subparagraphs. Then students put all in common to finish with the reading of the chapter entitled 'The Poverty'.

In this session, the teacher must lead the debate up to the point where the following questions arise:

—*What can we do? What actions can we take in order to help?*

There is a brainstorming, students talk about it, and the most accepted and voted idea is the chosen one. It would be interesting to promote its fulfilment. It might be quite useful to visit the website of the project "Implica't+" where there

⁴In *youtube* one can find lots of films about this science.

We recommend you to watch the programme broadcast by TV3 in *capsules de ciència*:
<http://www.ccma.cat/tv3/alacarta/capsules-de-ciencia/josefina-castellvi-investigacio-sota-zero/video/5327012/>

are a lot of ideas from school groups who have acted in a very altruistic and effective way.

ACTIVITY 9. The art as a complaint

Reading of the chapter 'The show' followed by a debate about how performing arts are able to display everyday problems. Through literature, painting, cinema, photography, and so on. We can not only enjoy, but also learn to become more human and better persons; much more altruist and generous people. We propose you to listen to Ismael Serrano's *song- complaint* ("Papá cuéntame otra vez" o "zona cero", for example) though there can also be useful some from Sabina, Silvio Rodríguez, Aute, Raimon among other composer and singers.

Worksheet 8. Ode to joy

This is a drawing/painting activity related to Ode to Joy, written by the poet Schiller and adapted by Beethoven for the Ninth Symphony. It has become the official anthem of the European Union.

ACTIVITY 10. Respect and care for life community

During the last session, there will take place the reading of the chapter entitled 'The farewell'. It will be related to the third principle from the Letter (Build up democratic, fair, participative, sustainable and quiet societies).

Right after the reading, there will start a debate so that students feel free to express what are, according to them, the most interesting, boring or emotional aspects from the tale and/or the Letter. Soon after that, they will do the last worksheet which is a kind of summary of all the contents worked on so far.

Worksheet 9. The Farewell

Students are made a set of questions which will help collect some information about the tale as well as students' written opinions.