

Water Stories from other Places

Focus

Students can get a glimpse of what life might be like in other places and have an opportunity to explore water issues and compare their own experiences with the children in these stories.

a) Stories from Pakistan and India

Procedure

- Read the two stories of children in other places. Compare the lifestyle of each child
- Q Consider Rubina's lifestyle. What job takes up most of her time each day? How much time do you think she must spend doing this job?
- Q What jobs are you asked to help with at home? How much time do they take you?
- Q How do these compare with the jobs that Mohini is required to do?
- Q Do you think Rubina Khan and Mohinican read and write? Explain your answer.

- Identify the differences between these children's lives and your own
- Q How does your day compare with Rubina Khan and Mohinican's day?
- Q Do you have the responsibility of looking after any animals? What does this involve?

- On a map of Asia
- Q Identify Pakistan and its neighbouring countries. Are there many rivers in Pakistan?
- Q Locate Varanasi (India) and trace the River Ganges. Can you identify other large rivers in Asia; you could start by looking at China.
- Q Have you ever experienced a monsoon? Describe it for other class members.

- Create a short play that could be performed by members of your class. The play should explore a day in the life of a village girl like Rubina or Mohini.

Resources

- Stories below:
 - My name is Rubina Khan
 - My name is Mohini
- Outline Map of Asia – with physical detail (ie mountains and rivers)
- Atlas

“My name is Rubina Khan”

“My name is Rubina Khan and I am a nine-year-old girl. I live in Pakistan, in a small village near the border of Iran and Afghanistan. I often sit at the side of the dirt road wondering what it would be like to live in a large city; one day I will visit Karachi.

I don't go to school. Not everyone is able to read and write in my country but there are free learning centres in factories, village halls and community centres. I only went to school for two years because my parents wanted me to work at home. My school did not have any buildings. We used to sit in the shade under trees to do our lessons.

I am needed at home to help with useful jobs. My work includes looking after the animals – we have some goats and a bullock that pulls our cart. Although I must walk quite a long way to fetch water from the well, I enjoy talking with my relatives and friends. I collect water about five times every day. The water from our well is usually clean and we don't often run out except for last year, when the monsoon didn't bring much rain so our well dried out. My parents were worried that we would not find any more water but, luckily, we did find some in another, more distant place.”

“My name is Mohini”

“My name is Mohini and I am a ten-year-old girl. I live in India, near a famous city called Varanasi. Many visitors pass through my village on the way to Varanasi; they visit because it is a holy city for Hindu people. Every day from sunrise Hindus bathe in the sacred Ganges River, while praying, because they believe they will get rid of evil things and become pure.

Once a year, my family visits the Ganges River at Varanasi. We keep together in the busy streets and markets because we are afraid of getting lost. The streets are very noisy with the sound of bicycle bells and people calling out. We usually stop at one of the streets stalls to buy chapattis and some curry to eat.

On the banks of the Ganges River we pray and I enjoy watching people meditate, others talk and feed the pigeons. Many tourists pay for boat trips to watch the sunrise over the Ganges. The river looks very beautiful early in the day: the orangey-pink glow of the sun's rays reflecting on the temples and buildings make me feel at peace.

The Ganges River begins 2,480 kilometres away in a cave in the Himalayan Mountains. Melting snow and ice make the river grow bigger. When the river reaches Calcutta, it splits into many tributaries and forms a delta, and then it flows into the sea. Near Calcutta the land is flat and, in the monsoon season, this area often floods. Many people lose their houses and everything they own because of floods.

Back in my village there are lots of activities that I help with, like weaving our straw beds and baskets. My mother teaches me how to do this. Another job which has to be done is fixing up the walls of the house; I smooth over and patch up any holes with mud and this lasts a year or two.”

b) A Poem from Zimbabwe

“Children’s Rain Song”

I see little children
throw away their small clothes
like happy, flying termites,
skipping, hopping and screaming in the rain.

Rain fall fall
we’ll eat berries,
rain fall for all
we’ll eat mealies,
we’ll eat cucumbers,
rain fall fall.

Little brown bodies
shouting in the rain
laughing and playing
splashing in the puddles
loving all the rain.

Rain fall fall
We’ll eat berries, we’ll eat groundnuts
We’ll eat all.

Children in the rain
they don’t feel the pain
they don’t know how I want
to be young again
and dance in the rain.

By Musaemura Zimunya

- Thinking about the poem:
 - Q What are the children being compared to?
 - Q What do termites throw off when they fly out of the ground?
 - Q Is the poet a child or an adult? How do you know?
 - Q Would you describe the writer as happy or sad?
- Draw the scene this poem describes.
 - Q How do you respond when it begins to rain?
 - Q What activities do you like to do in the rain?
 - Q When did it last rain in your local area? Do you know how much rain fell?
 - Q Does your local neighbourhood need more rain or less rain?
 - Q What are the reasons for this?
- Find out about Zimbabwe. Locate it on a map.
 - Q Do you think Zimbabwe gets good rainfall? What does the poem indicate?
 - Q What are the various kinds of food mentioned?
 - Q In what ways are the children of Zimbabwe similar to you?
 - Q Have you ever had the chance to play outside in the rain? What was it like?
 - Q Imagine you could talk with some of the children described in the poem. What are the questions you would like to ask them?

c) News stories from other places

Focus

The following stories are examples of news grabs to be found on the Internet that might be used as good discussion starters when introducing global issues of water scarcity and poor sanitation.

Resources

- Refer to the Online resources – Useful web addresses in Appendix 6

The 'water mafia' draining India

By Anu Anand (Summary by Louise Shaler)

BBC correspondent, Delhi, India, Asia

Dated: Thursday, 19 August, 2004

Western India is in its fourth year of drought, and people are resorting to questionable methods to get enough water. In New Delhi, where the water table has dropped as much as 4 m in some areas, taps only run for 15 minutes each morning, so residents who can afford it buy extra water from privately owned tankers.

Those who can't are cutting into city water lines and diverting water to their own streets, leaving their neighbours' taps dry. They're called "the water mafia," and the water board seems powerless to stop them.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/3577502.stm

Cholera Epidemic in Riverside Villages Threatens to Spread to Capital

(Summary by Louise Shaler)

Niger, Africa –

20th August, 2004

A cholera epidemic in Niger's Tillabery District, which has killed 27 people and infected 1426 over the past four months, threatens to spread to the capital, Niamey.

According to the National System of Health Information, although 14 treatment centres have been established in the district, the disease will persist until people stop drinking polluted water from the Niger River. The director urged residents to boil or chlorinate the water or, better still, use government-approved wells. -

Source: allAfrica.com by (accessed: UN Integrated Regional Information Networks 20/8/2004)