

PS Teaching Literature and Promoting Intercultural Competence
(ENG.01280UB)

READING PROJECT

**The impact of climate change and environmental problems
on life**



The Carbon Diaries, by Saci Lloyd

A Friend of the Earth, by T. C. Boyle

Water Inc., by Varda Burstyn

Ship Breaker, by Paolo Bacigalupi

Level: 8th grade

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I Information about the book project

Topic:

This book project focuses on the impact of climate change/environmental catastrophes on life, the struggle between those who damage the environment for the sake of profit and those who try to protect the environment and how different characters cope with changed conditions/living in a world devastated by climate change.

Books:

- *The Carbon Diaries*, by Saci Lloyd

(written in diary form, tells the story of teenager Laura whose life is changed by carbon rations imposed by the UK, extreme weather conditions and family crises)

- *A Friend of the Earth*, by T. C. Boyle

(alternating chapters tell the story of 75-year-old and middle-aged environmentalist Ty Tierwater, who fights for environmental protection before and after climate change has impacted and changed the world as we know it)

- *Water Inc.*, by Varda Burstyn

(this climate-change thriller narrates the struggles between corporate destructive power striving to maximise profit by extracting Quebecois water and piping it to the USA at high environmental costs and environmental activists trying to prevent this project)

- *Ship Breaker*, by Paolo Bacigalupi

(this book tells the story of teenage Nailer who hopes for a better life in world marked by the consequences of climate change and thereby paints a picture of a possible future after Earth's devastation by climate change: sea levels have risen drastically, former glorious cities were flooded, weather conditions are extreme, resources are scarce)

N.B.: Depending on the class, any of the books listed above may also be exchanged for the following books:

- *The Carbon diaries 2017*, Saci Lloyd (diary form, continuing Laura's story when she starts studying at university)
- *Ecotopia*, Ernest Callenbach (alternates between newspaper articles and diary form, reading feels a bit like reading a report)

- *The Year of the Flood*, Margaret Atwood
- *The Windup Girl*, Paolo Bacigalupi (more complex than *Ship Breaker*, addresses problems in a world devastated by climate change more directly than *Ship Breaker*)

Level:

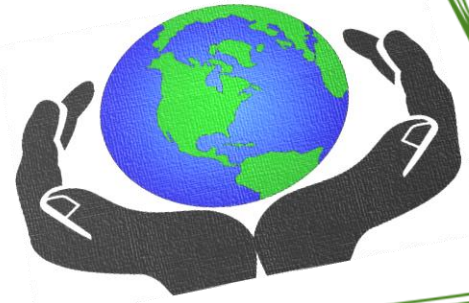
This book project is designed for 8th grade students as the topic climate change and sustainability are covered in geography in the same grade. The thematic input students receive in geography will provide them with background knowledge and make the reading more relevant and interesting for them; the book project in turn can help students deepen their understanding of what climate change means both for the present and future and render the topic more relevant to them through immersion.

II Project materials

The project material comprises the sheets with all the tasks students do in the course of this reading project. Students have a reading diary in which all the materials and all the texts produced by them are collected.

Book project:

Impact of climate change and environmental problems on life



1. Choose your book

Take a look at all books. Look at the cover, read the blurb and then read the first three or four pages of each book.

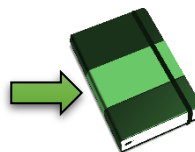
To help you choose the right book for you, use the following tips:

- *How many unknown words are there on each page? Can you guess their meaning from the context? Do you think they all belong to the same area (for example: technology)?*
- *What kind of book do you think this is? Do you think it is a fantasy, a science fiction, realistic fiction, historical fiction, mystery, a crime story?*
- *What do you think the plot will be about? Make a one-sentence prediction for each book.*
- *Which characters have you met in the pages you read? What kind of other characters do you think you will meet in the book?*
- *What do you know about the setting?*

Write down your findings in the table provided by your teacher.

Don't forget to rate each of the books. Award one to four stars ☆☆☆☆, depending on how they interest you – do not choose your book because your best friend is interested in it. Then decide which of the books you would like to read. Write down your first, second, and third choices on a sticky note and stick it onto the book poster of your first choice. As far as possible, you will be given your first choice.

Put the book choosing table into your reading diary.





2. Getting ready for the book (pre-reading)

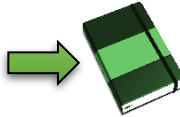
Jot, pair, share

Now that you have chosen your book for the climate change/environmental problem reading project, let's activate your knowledge on the issue. *What do you know about climate change? What comes to your mind when you think about environmental problems?* Jot down your ideas, then share them with a partner and make note of any ideas you did not think of.

Imagining – non-stop writing

Now take your time to imagine what might happen in the book. *What made you choose the book? What do you expect will happen? How might the characters' lives be influenced by the environment? What might the world they live in look like?* **Write non-stop for ten minutes.**

Include your text in your reading diary.



3. The books have arrived!!! Get your copy and start reading.

Get together in groups with 2 or 3 of your peers who have chosen the same book. Find a comfortable spot and read your books quietly for the next 20 minutes. Don't rush, it is not a competition! Take your time, read slowly and imagine the scenes and characters as vividly as possible.

After 20 minutes, stop reading and discuss what you have read in your group. Distribute the discussion cards (provided by your teacher) in your group. Each of you is responsible for their card and has to guide the group through it. **Write all the questions and answers into your reading diary.**



4. While reading, do the following tasks

4.1. Diary entry



When you have read the first 50 pages of your book, write an entry into your reading diary (5 minutes of non-stop writing).



4.2. Research – while reading

Make a note of the 8 most important causes for and consequences of climate change/catastrophes/environmental problems mentioned or present in the book. Collect specific information in particular. Then do some research. *Does the information presented in the book correspond to facts? Does it correspond to the predictions made on the basis of facts? Could it even be based on real events?*

Collect the eight causes and consequences and the findings of your research in your reading diary (be prepared to share your findings with your group as part of the reading circle later on).



4.3. Expressions to remember

Make a note of 10 words/expressions/phrases you would like to remember. Note them down in your reading diary like this:



Word/phrase: *rummage*

Sentence from the book using the word/phrase: *She went back into her bedroom, and rummaged in the pocket of her jeans.*

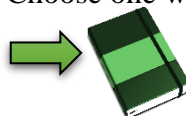
Your own true sentence using the word/phrase: *Sometimes when I mislay something, I rummage around the room until I find it.*

Useful collocations/related words: *rummage around/about/in/through*

5. When you have finished reading the book (post reading)

5.1. Writing task

Look at the following two choice boards. Choose one writing task from each choice board and include your texts in your reading diary.





<p>Write a newspaper article</p> <p>Choose an important moment/event from your book and write an article about it for a local newspaper. Do not forget to cover the 5 'wh' and 1 'h' questions – but be careful to stick to the style of a newspaper article.</p>	<p>Your idea</p> <p>(check idea with your teacher first)</p>	<p>Write a review for Amazon</p> <p>Include a plot summary (don't give away the ending), your own rating and what you liked/disliked about the book and why. (If you have an account on Amazon, upload your review)</p>
<p>Write an email to the author</p> <p>Do you have unanswered questions about the story or the writing style? Write an email to the author of the book you read to ask all your questions and tell him/her what you think about the book.</p>	<p>Write an email / a letter</p> <p>to a character/from the point of view of a character to another character.</p>	<p>Write a diary entry</p> <p>From the point of view of one of the characters. What situation is the character in? How does he/she feel?</p>
<p>Write a 'found poem'</p> <p>Select a chapter from the book you have just read that you consider powerful or interesting. Then select words, lines, and phrases that you think project strong images and show the impact the chapter makes. Arrange this material into a poem.</p>	<p>Your idea</p> <p>(check idea with your teacher first)</p>	<p>Create a pamphlet</p> <p>Think of an issue that is very important to your character. Then create a pamphlet aimed at persuading others of the importance of the issue. Include factual information, testimonials, pictures or graphics, etc.</p>
<p>Write a character alphabet</p> <p>Choose a character you like and then create sentences based on the alphabet scheme that demonstrate your knowledge of the character. E.g. A is for the ABUSE Zeke took at the hand of a racist mob.</p>	<p>Current events</p> <p>Select three current news or feature stories from newspapers that you think your character would be interested in. Then explain (in writing) how your character would respond to each of the stories and the opinions your character would have about what was happening in the story. Include the newspaper articles in your reading diary.</p>	<p>Point of view column</p> <p>Write an opinion column like those that appear on the editorial page of the newspaper. Choose a theme or topic from your book that is important to one of the characters of your book. Write the column from the point of view of one of the characters.</p>

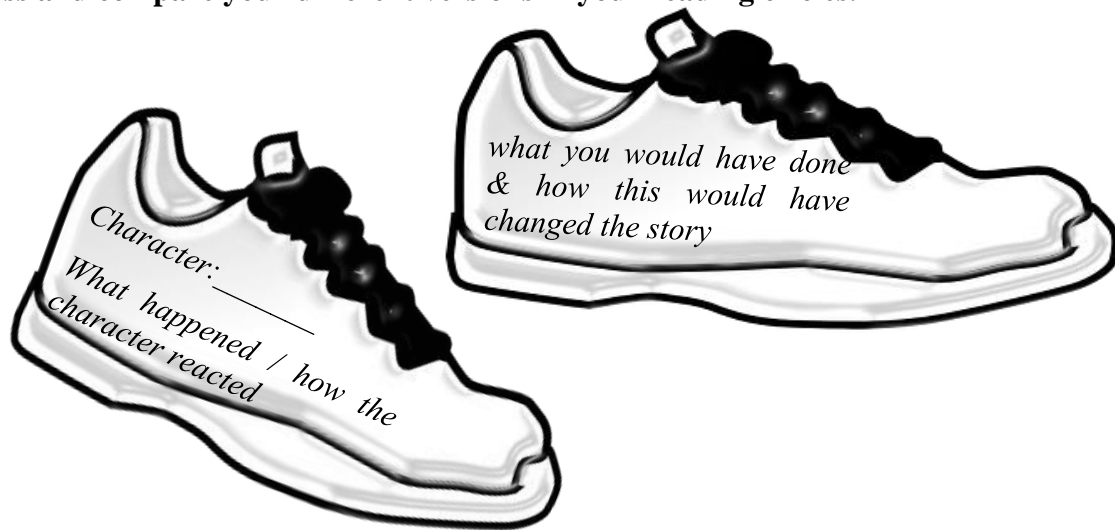


5.2. Putting yourself into the character's shoes



While reading your book, were you at any point dissatisfied with one of the characters' actions? Would you have acted differently? Why? How would this have influenced the story?

Draw two shoes (what kind of shoes do you think the character wears? Why?). In one of the shoes, write the name of the character, what happened and how the character reacted. Write how you would have reacted and how this would have changed the story into the other shoes.

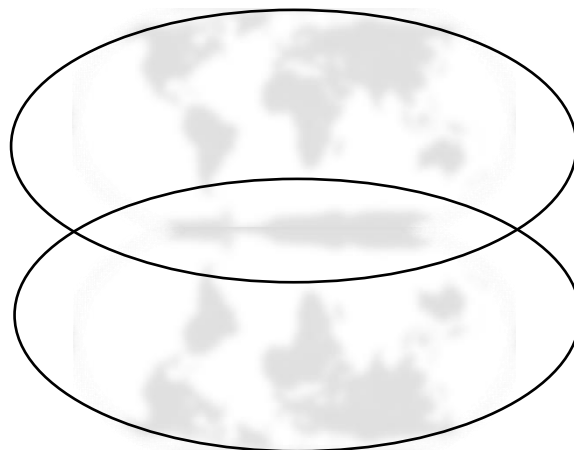
Do this task at home in your reading diary   and bring it along to class to discuss and compare your different versions in your reading circles.



5.3. Different Worlds?

Think about everything you have learned about the world of the book you have read. *How is the world of the story different from our world? What do both have in common?* Consider the state of the environment in particular. Use a separate sheet to draw a full-page Venn Diagram and include it in your reading diary.  

Do this task at home and bring it along to class to discuss and compare your different versions in your reading circles.





5.4. Questions, questions, questions. (in class)

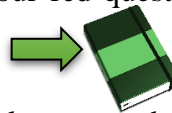
Get together with 2-3 of your peers who have read the same novel. You will get 5 red and 5 green cards from your teacher.

Red question cards: write 5 questions that you haven't been able to answer when reading the book. Think of real questions you have – not boring “comprehension questions”.

Green cards: write 5 interesting features/elements that you have come across in your novel: clear statements about environmental issues, climate change, other themes, characters, plot development, style and tone, setting...

Sign your cards, then put your cards in the middle and check if there are any similarities.

Discuss the green cards first, then try to find answers for your red questions cards. **Write your answers and discussion notes into your reading diary.**



If you need additional info, check the Internet, the library, or ask your teacher.

When you have finished, share, compare and discuss your research results (task 4.2.) your ‘shoes’ (task 5.2.) and your ‘different words?’ Venn Diagrams in your groups.

5.5. Prepare your presentation

Your presentation must be really professionally done. Collect information about the following aspects of the novel. Decide who is going to present them and what is the most efficient order to present these features. (Do you have your own creative idea? Talk to your teacher.)

- **Author and background**

Include only relevant information, do not tell the life story of the author

- **Brief plot information**

Use a plot mountain or a plot diagram (focus on the 8 most important aspects of the story)

- **Main characters**

If it makes sense for your book, create a character constellation. Only include important characters (especially with *Water, Inc.*). Go deeper with your main character (look at the choices below).



- **Identity bag/character suitcase** (bring a bag full of objects that are somehow important to the main character of your book. Show them and explain their relevance.)
- **Character portrait or collage** (find fitting pictures and words from magazines and present (one of) the main character(s) in a collage.)
- **Character profile** (ask your teacher to give the material for this option)
- **Setting**

How important is the setting? What role does it play? Make sure your classmates can really visualize it (you might want to combine this with the information on ‘climate change/environment’)
- **Climate change/environment**

How are the characters’ lives influenced by climate change/environmental problems/the environment they live in? Do these aspects correlate to facts? Use the research you did while reading as well as your Venn Diagram (“different worlds?”). Be sure to give the audience a clear picture of the role climate change and the environmental conditions play in the book. Think of a creative and meaningful way of presenting this information (for example, you could include drawings of important settings, show a Venn Diagramm etc.)

In addition, choose two of the following options for your presentation:

- **Alternative book cover**

Design an alternative book cover. Make sure that the cover relates to an important event/theme of the book. Think about what colours you use and which atmosphere can be created by them.
- **Write a poem/song-lyrics**
- **Act out a scene**
- **Important quotes**

Collect important quotes from your book. Put them onto an A3 poster. When you present the poster, tell your classmates who said what and why the quotes are important.
- **Acrostic poem**

Write the title of the novel downwards on a page. Then use each letter as an initial for a line about the book.

III Worksheets

Book title	New words per page	More about the book	Your rating
		<u>Type of book:</u> <u>Plot prediction:</u> <u>Characters:</u> <u>Setting:</u>	
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		<u>Type of book:</u> <u>Plot prediction:</u> <u>Characters:</u> <u>Setting:</u>	
		<u>Type of book:</u> <u>Plot prediction:</u> <u>Characters:</u> <u>Setting:</u>	

Discussion cards for activity 3. (the books have arrived)

<p>Language Police <i>English please!!</i></p> <p>In this activity, you are responsible for reminding your group to speak only English. Whenever you catch somebody using German, show them this card.</p>	<p>Master of Disaster</p> <p><i>What role do you think the environment plays in your book? What have you found out about its role so far? Have any environmental problems been mentioned so far? Where is the story set? How does the setting and its environment influence the characters' lives?</i></p>
<p>Question Master</p> <p>Ask each of your peers to write down one questions that they have in mind now. <i>What is they would like to know about the book?</i></p> <p>Share your questions and write them into your reading diary. Maybe you can answer them later or ask your teacher.</p>	<p>Character Detective</p> <p>List all the characters you have met so far. <i>What do you know about them? Who are they? What is their role in the story? What mood are they in? Do you like/dislike them? Do you trust/mistrust them?</i></p>
<p>New Expressions Expert</p> <p>Ask each of your peers to find one new phrase or expression that they would like to remember. Highlight these phrases in your book and copy them into your reading diary.</p>	

Character Profiles

Choose one interesting main character in the book/story you are reading and take a closer look at his/her personality. Who is he/she really? Look at the different levels of their personalities, starting with the environment (setting) they live in and move in towards their spiritual centers. Draw a circle diagram like the one on this page and write a few keywords or sentences into each layer of the character's personality.

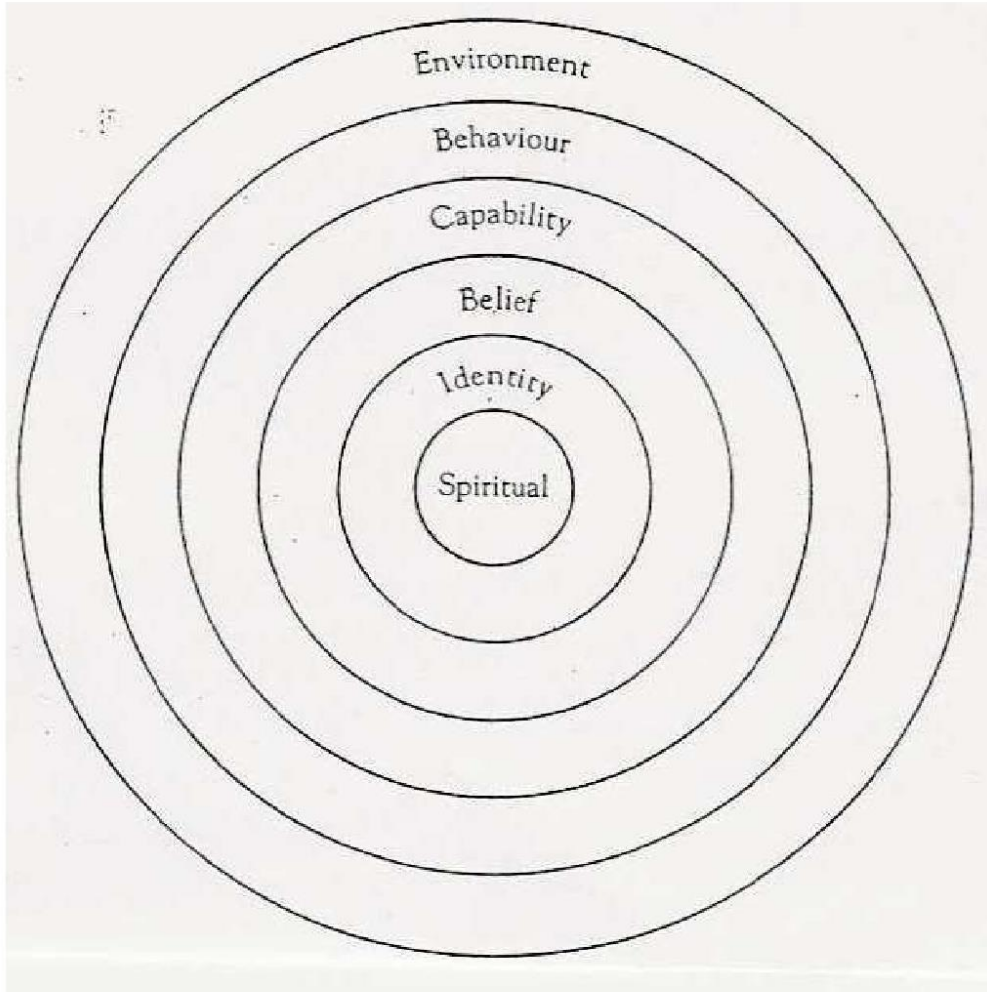
Slip into the character's mind and consider the following questions:

- Environment:** Where does your character live/work? What is this place like? How does it affect him/her? Who else is there? How do these other people influence him/her? How does your character get along with them?
- Behavior:** What does your character do? List a few important or typical actions or activities of your character
- Capability:** What is your character good at? What strategies does he/she use in the story? Does he/she use them openly and consciously? What skills does he/she have?
- Beliefs:** What are your character's basic beliefs? Think of the various ideas that he/she thinks are true, and that your character uses as a basis of daily action. Beliefs can be both permissions and limitations. (e.g.: "I am strong! The positive forces will always win!" or "I am afraid of my stronger enemy, he will certainly kill me." or "I don't do this or that because I think it's wrong.")
- Identity:** What are your character's core values and his/her mission in life? What does your character want to achieve?
- Spiritual:** This is the deepest level of any character or person. Here we consider such metaphysical questions as "Why are we here? What is our purpose?" These questions are hardly ever asked or answered openly. Try to slip into your character's mind and answer these questions for him/her. What would he/she say?

Title of Book/Story

Author:

Character's name:



Now do a character profile for one of the main characters in your book:

IV References

Pictures are all taken from [Pixabay](#) (CC0)

Materials largely taken/adapted from: Pölzleitner, Elisabeth (2018). “Teaching Literature and Promoting Intercultural Competence.” Unpublished course handout. Summer term 2018. Department of English Studies: University of Graz.

Writing task of the second choice board taken from: Mitchell, Diana (1998). “Fifty Alternative to the Book Report.” *English Journal* 87.1: 92-95.