Primary climate justice presentation

Please amend and edit this script to meet the needs of the young people in your audience.

Slide 1 - Climate Justice
Ask pupils if anyone can tell you what climate change is. Help them to articulate and correct their answers if required. Be mindful of eco-anxiety (see the notes in ths resource) and facilitate this carefully.

Then ask them if they know what 'climate justice' means. It's unlikely that they will know this, so then ask if they know what 'justice' means. Justice is about things being fair, and putting things right when they are unfair or something wrong has occurred. You could ask pupils to give you some examples of justice, for example: people being punished if they commit crimes, or people working out ways to say sorry to each other and make things right when they have done wrong. There is unfairness when it comes to climate change too - and that is what climate justice is all about. Today we are going to learn what is unfair about climate change and what might be done to try to put it right.

Climate change is caused by people burning fossil fuels - like coal, gas and oil - to heat their homes, power their factories, fuel their planes and cars, and run their machines. But most people in the countries of the 'Global South' - in Africa, Asia and South America - do not use a lot of fossil fuels. The average person in Great Britain emits twenty eight times the level of greenhouse gases than the average person in the West African country of Burkina Faso! Therefore, people in Burkina Faso are experiencing a climate crisis they did not cause. Do you think this is fair?

This is the idea of climate justice. The people who have done the least to cause the climate crisis are the people who are the most affected by it. Meanwhile the people who have done the most to emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the people in the wealthy countries like ourselves, are those who are so far affected the least by climate change. Unlike Burkina Faso, life for most people in countries like ours carries on close to normal.

This presentation introduces how we can tackle the injustices of the climate crisis and build a better and fairer world where there is climate justice for all.

It will introduce an art and creative writing project where you can have your say about climate justice and be heard by MPs and government ministers.

The photograph shows young people showing MPs around the first Get Creative for Climate Justice which took place in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster, in December 2023.

Primary climate justice presentation

Slide 2 - The Power of Your Creativity

Art and creative writing are powerful ways of getting your messages across and having your voices heard. Throughout history, artists and writers have used their creativity to influence leaders and the public alike.

Early in 2025, we're holding the second Get Creative for Climate Justice exhibition in the Houses of Parliament and we're inviting politicians to come and visit. Then in November 2025 we'll be doing the same thing at the Scottish Parliament. These politicians have the power to make important decisions about how we deal with climate change. Letting them know what you think can be a really powerful way to make a difference on this issue. We want you to have the opportunity to call on your politicians to be more determined in making the changes that the world community is urgently demanding.

Please use your full imagination and creativity. We simply ask that your work is respectful and inclusive, and that you would feel proud to have it viewed by MPs or MSPs.

Before you begin, the next slides explain three big issues involved in climate justice. Please think carefully and critically about these and do your own research. How you will represent these ideas in your art and creative writing is your decision. We look forward to seeing it.

Slide 3 - Reduce Emissions

Since the Industrial Revolution began in England around 1800, greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) have increased the world's temperature by about 1.1C. This may not sound much, but scientists have warned that the safe limit for temperature increases is 1.5C.

So the first step for climate justice is for countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and keep the global temperature increase below 1.5C. Agreeing how to do this is proving difficult. At the COP26 climate change conference held in Glasgow in 2021, the plans which countries submitted would have led to global heating of 2.4C, well above the 1.5C limit.

This issue is made complicated by the fact that countries have not emitted equal amounts of greenhouse gases. Some countries - in the Global North, where the UK is - have been burning fossil fuels in large quantities for a long time while other countries - in the Global South, where Burkina Faso is - haven't. We saw in slide 1 that the average person in the UK has carbon emissions of 28 times the average person in Burkina Faso. At the same time, the average wealth per person of the UK is 52 times greater than the average wealth per person in Burkina Faso.

Primary climate justice presentation

There is usually a connection like this between burning fossil fuels and a country's wealth, because many countries burned fossil fuels as they industrialised their economies and built up their wealth . And although inequalities exist in every country, overall the wealthy countries that have been burning the largest quantities of fossil fuels over the last three hundred years haven't yet been affected by the climate crisis as severely as the less wealthy countries.

This is an injustice. A fairer future would see wealthy countries reduce their carbon emissions fastest and first - and many countries have now made commitments to stop producing carbon emissions (including ours, which has committed to be Net Zero by 2050, meaning that within the next thirty years, our country should not be contributing to climate change).

The photo shows firefighters battling a wildfire just outside Cape Town, South Africa, in April 2021. Despite being a country of the Global South, South Africa still relies heavily on coal for its energy and has high greenhouse gas emissions.

Slide 4 - Climate Finance

Even limiting global heating to 1.5C will change the earth's climate for ever. Everywhere people will have to make changes to live with a new climate.

For example, in the UK millions of homes will have to be insulated to control their temperatures and reduce energy use. Getting to net zero is going to require countries to change the way they do just about everything – including more public transport, less waste, renewable energy, properly insulated homes, changes to food, farming and land use. It will require countries to not just stop producing carbon emissions, but also to capture and store emissions already in the atmosphere. It will also mean that people need to adapt to a warmer world, by growing different sorts of plants and putting in flood defences for example.

In the countries of the Global South, where the impacts of climate change are greatest, adapting to the new climate is even more urgent. However, these countries often don't have sufficient money to invest in adapting to climate change.

At the COP climate change conference in 2009, the wealthy countries agreed to provide $100 billion per year to help the countries of the Global South to adapt. This 'climate finance' has been slow to be paid. Now that we are in 2023, the figure of $100 billion is out of date and not enough. A recent report estimates it should now be $300 billion.

The photo shows a protective sea wall in Axim in Ghana, West Africa. Rising sea levels caused by global heating are a threat to people all along the West African coast. In Axim the rising sea will flood communities and destroy the fishing industry unless defences are built.

Primary climate justice presentation

Climate justice recognises that the countries who have primarily caused the climate crisis have a responsibility to help the most affected countries adapt. This help is arriving, but so far it has fallen short of what is needed.

Slide 5 - Loss and Damage

Disasters have always been part of life. When a disaster strikes, the response has usually been for charities and governments to raise money and try to help.

In recent years, climate science has shown that global heating is making 'natural' disasters more frequent, more widespread and more severe. Disasters now are less commonly a case of bad luck with the weather and more commonly a case of the changing climate.

Extreme weather driven by climate change can happen anywhere. In parts of the UK, for example, we experience more severe winter storms and many countries in Europe and North America experience more serious summer droughts, high temperatures and dangerous wildfires.

However, the greatest concentration of extreme weather events occurs in the tropical countries of the Global South. These countries often don't have the money or resources to recover well from extreme weather.

Loss refers to something which is lost forever because of a disaster - for example crops and animals that die in a drought. Damage refers to something that is damaged and can be repaired - for example a house damaged by a storm.

The COP27 climate change conference in 2022 agreed to set up a loss and damage fund to compensate countries for climate disasters. This means that paying countries for the loss and damage they experience from climate change is no longer simply down to charity. Governments have committed money to it.

However, the countries mainly responsible for climate change have not yet promised any significant amount of money for the fund. This is one of the greatest climate justice challenges facing the world as the cost of loss and damage from climate change is massive. A recent report estimates the fund may need $100 billion per year. The photo shows loss and damage caused by Cyclone Freddy in Malawi in March 2023. Tropical storms that once mainly affected the coastal areas of East Africa now more often extend further inland to landlocked countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Primary climate justice presentation

Slide 6 - Get Creative for Climate Justice

When people think about 'climate action' they very often only think about reducing their carbon emissions. As we've seen (slide 3) this is an important part of the solution.

But it remains controversial as countries have not yet agreed by how much and how fast they should cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

Countries emit very different amounts of greenhouse gases and have been doing so for different lengths of time. This is an important part of the climate justice issue which could be shown in your art or creative writing.

People do not often think about who will pay for loss and damage when they think about 'climate action'. However even when the world reaches 'net zero' emissions, the effects of climate change will be permanent and global heating will have caused severe loss and damage.

These effects have been, are and will be felt most strongly in the countries of the Global South. These countries are on the front line of the climate crisis yet have done the least to cause it. Climate justice calls for the countries who have become wealthy through their greenhouse gas emissions to take responsibility for climate finance and loss and damage. How could your art or creative writing represent these ideas?

Your role is to design a piece of art or creative writing which clearly communicates your call for climate justice. You may use whichever medium or materials you wish provided your work can be displayed on A1, A2 or A3 paper. Your work must be respectful and inclusive, and you should feel proud for it to be seen by MPs and Ministers.

Please also give your work a title, write a brief caption to explain it and tell us your first name and your school's name.

Good luck and thank you!