Nature and Art

Reconnect with Nature **Reconnect with Yourself**

The lesson aims to reconnect students with nature by becoming "artists." Students will shift their full focus onto the natural environment, either by using natural materials creatively or by closely observing their surroundings and drawing inspiration for their artwork.

In this lesson, students begin with activities that develop their vocabulary related to jobs, particularly in the field of art, and also practise simple Yes/No questions in English. They then proceed to cloud watching, which helps them relax and stimulates their creative thinking. Next, students choose an art activity—either individually, in pairs or small groups—that is inspired by nature or incorporates natural elements (e. g. they can become land artists, architects, perfume makers, stone painters, body tattooers). After completing their projects, they present or display their artworks in a special gallery. In the follow-up, students review the vocabulary of jobs and participate in a final debriefing.

Aims:	**Reconnect with Nature -** Students become "artists" using materials from nature or drawing inspiration from the environment for their chosen activities. This experience helps them connect with their surroundings and develop a deeper appreciation and respect for the environment. They also engage in cloud watching to enhance this connection. **Reconnect with Yourself -** Through creating artwork, students become more mindful of their own feelings, needs, and forms of expression helping them to be also more perceptive to inspiration from their surrounding environment. They also practise mindfulness during the cloud-watching activity. Being in nature, especially in a forest, enhances well-being. It helps reduce stress, improves mood, boosts energy and generally makes us feel better. Some activities involving the senses help train concentration and mindfulness, allowing you to reconnect with yourself and nature. You explore your feelings and needs and become fully aware of your surroundings. Nature, trees, and forests provide numerous benefits to our health and well-being. Talk with your students about all the benefits and the impact that an outdoor lesson has on their state of mind and learning.
Language aims:	**Lower levels (A1, A2):** revise vocabulary related to jobs (artists) and practise making Yes/No questions **Higher levels (A2+ and higher):** revise vocabulary related to jobs (artists) **Skills practised:** speaking
Length:	90 mins
Materials required:	• if you can, bring various materials and tools to support your students with artwork (e.g. scissors, glue, papers, staplers, small containers, chalks, stone paints, body paints, ropes, strings, wire…) • Taking mobiles or other devices outdoors is not recommended so as not to distract students´ full attention. However if you decide to offer the job of "video producer" or "photographer", take a tablet or a camera with you. • optionally, you can prepare cards with jobs-artists written on them if you want to visualize the new vocabulary and enhance students´ learning
Place requirements:	a place with a great variety of natural materials, ideally with trees, a forest
Educational policies:	★ **GreenComp – The European Sustainability Competence Framework** (European Union, 2022) 1.3 Promoting nature – to acknowledge that humans are part of nature, and to respect the needs and rights of other species and of nature itself in order to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems ★ **LifeComp – The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence** (European Union, 2020) P1.1 Self-regulation – Awareness and expression of personal emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviour. P3.1 Wellbeing – Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and wellbeing.



LANGUAGE BOX

For groups of A1 – A2 level:
Before doing the lesson, consider how familiar your students are with the following language. If most of the students are not, learning or revising it before the outdoor lesson is recommended:

- basic instructions - e.g. Stand in a circle, Make pairs, Stand up, Sit down, Don´t speak, Raise your arm, Ask questions, Find something
- making Yes/No questions - Do you work at nights? Are you good at...? Can you sing?

ARTISTS (A1 – A2 levels)

- painter, tattoo artist, actor/actress, dancer, writer, singer, musician, architect, photographer...

ARTISTS (A2+ and higher levels) – the same vocab as in the box above plus:

- poet, sculptor, tattoo designer, fashion designer, street artist, land artist, jewelry designer, music composer, dance choreographer...
- visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, digital arts

LESSON PLAN

OPENING RITUAL (10 mins)

★ Begin with a ritual to help students focus and become fully aware of their surroundings. You can use the same or a similar ritual as in your indoor lessons. Opening rituals signal to students that the lesson has started and can include greeting each other, sharing needs and feelings, or anything related to the "here and now." The aim is to help them focus and set a positive atmosphere.

★ For instance, start with everyone standing or sitting in a circle and expressing their current state, mood, energy level, or talking about their day so far. They could share what made them happy or laugh, either at school, at home, or on their way to school. Here are some methods to facilitate this:
- Only volunteers speak.
- Students first talk in pairs or small groups and then share highlights with everyone.
- Use methods to involve everyone, such as: "Thermometer" – showing how much energy they have, how good their mood is, or the same with thumbs up/down. Or you can have some statements: "Take a step forward if you had a good breakfast" or "you like the weather today". Students can also express their mood with body language. Point to an imaginary line on the ground – a scale for students to stand according to their mood (good - bad), energy (high - low) or the time they woke up that day etc.
- For the connection with the surrounding environment, you can have each student say one word for something they can see / hear / smell / feel.

Making students move right from the beginning will facilitate their communication and help you, as the teacher, understand the starting point of the lesson. If students lack energy and are not enthusiastic, you can express hope that the environment and nature will boost their energy. Saying this out loud will make it easier for them to reflect on the benefits of the outdoor lesson at the end.

★ If necessary, remind your students of the importance of respectful behaviour towards each other and nature.

LEAD IN (25 mins)

- ★ Have students gather in a circle, either standing or sitting. Join them and introduce the aims of the lesson. Ask them whether they think that the vocabulary of jobs is easy or difficult for them. Everybody can show a thumb up if they believe it is easy for them.
- ★ Say you are going to mime some jobs and they will guess what it is. It's recommended to choose something easy so they will find it easy and fun and it will make them better prepared for the next activity. Examples: a driver, a hairdresser, a chef.
- ★ **Secret agent.** Ask students to make groups of 3 - 5 people instructing them that now it will be them miming some specific jobs. Ensure there's some distance between the groups, but all should be at a similar distance from you.

  In your group, please, decide who will be number 1, 2, 3 etc. I´m the super agent and I have some information for your groups. They are words with different jobs but the only thing I can tell you is that all of them are artists. Now all agents No. 1 (from all groups), please come to me. I´m going to say quietly a profession (an artist) and your task will be to run back quickly to your groups and to mimic the job (not using any words or sounds). Don´t say the job. Use your body to help them guess what job it is. When the group guesses it correctly, they raise their hands. Then No. 2 comes to you and you do the same with a new job.

  Choose a few jobs from the language box above - according to the level of your students. You can either whisper the jobs to them or you can visualize it and prepare slips or cards of paper with these jobs before the lesson and show them.
- ★ **Vocabulary.** After you finish, have the students say aloud all the jobs from the game and brainstorm more words for other artists. If you´ve got them written, show the words.
- ★ **Yes/No questions.** Next, practise the jobs and Yes/No questions. In your head choose one of the jobs you´ve talked about, one of the artists. *I have a new job but I cannot tell you which one it is. We've talked about it. So please ask me Yes/No questions to help you find out what job it is. For example, you can ask: Do you work in the evenings? Do you use paper at work? Are you good at singing? Can you do the job alone, without other people?*
- ★ **Pairwork.** After the students guess your job correctly, have them pair up or form small groups and do the same activity. Each person will choose a new job (only artists) and their partners will ask Yes/No questions. Give them 5-7 minutes, taking turns until you stop the activity.
- ★ **Making questions.** Each group or pair will share two questions they asked each other. Correct them if necessary.

MAIN PART (40 mins)

- ★ **Cloud watching.** Artists need to be creative and imaginative for their work and often need to focus fully. *Let´s do an activity which will help us to calm down, be more focused and creative. It´s cloud watching. What do you think we´re going to do? How long do you think your group can do it in complete silence? Without any speaking or making sounds?*

  Setting their own time, making it a challenge, will increase their motivation. 2 or 3 minutes are usually an achievable time. Tell them they are going to find a comfortable position (laying or sitting) and look up to the sky for the time given – without speaking. They can observe how fast the clouds are moving and what they look like. In case the sky is clear without any clouds at all, you can ask students to sit or lay down under trees and observe the sky through the leaves and branches.
- ★ Then do a short reflection:

  How did it feel? (everybody can show with their thumb up or down or in between)
  What did you see? What did the clouds look like?
  Who feels more relaxed now?

  Tell them that cloud watching is an activity that they can do anytime and anywhere and it can help them to reduce stress and improve their mood.
- ★ **Artwork.** Now it's time to become artists and get inspired by this place, by nature, and by the sky. You can choose any kind of art you want and then you'll have some time to work on it. Present the options to your students (also based on materials and tools you´ve brought), leaving space for any other ideas they might have. Give them 1 minute

of thinking time (everyone in silence), and then they can talk to others if they prefer not to work individually. They can find one or more partners. Set a time limit—e.g., 15 minutes (considering how much time you have until the end of the lesson). Encourage students to use inspiration from the natural world as much as possible. If you've brought additional materials (papers, colored stones, face paints, glue, staplers, ropes, scissors, water, small containers, strings, wire, etc.), show them. Here are some ideas. Feel free to add some your and your students ideas.

- **Architects:** Build a house of any size.
- **Land Artists:** Create a work of art with natural materials (e.g., a tower of stones, leaf mandalas, stone circles).
- **Painters:** Make a frame (e.g., made of branches) and create a picture.
- **Fashion Designers:** Draw a person on paper and create an outfit with natural materials.
- **Photographers:** Take interesting photos of nature (use a tablet or a camera).
- **Video Producers:** Record a video of any living creatures you find.
- **Musicians:** Create a sound or rhythm using natural materials (e.g., branches), body percussion (clapping hands, stomping feet, snapping fingers, etc.).
- **Jewelry Makers:** Make a necklace or bracelet using string or wire.
- **Perfume Makers:** Use a small container to collect various scents.
- **Stone Painters:** Paint stones; you can also use multiple stones to make a mosaic.
- **Tattoo Artists / Body Painters:** Draw nature-inspired designs on the skin.

★ **Gallery.** Students present their work. Decide together on the process - e.g. it could be in the form of a gallery with a guided tour (students presenting their work) or a gallery in which everybody admires the artwork on their own.

★ **Reflection.** In the following reflection appreciate students´creativity and above all emphasize the inspiration from nature, which is the best artist ever! You can choose from the following questions and add yours. If expressing opinions in English is too difficult for your students, continue in their native language. Some artwork can be presented in the next lesson (a video, photos…).

Intrapersonal questions:

How easy or difficult was the activity for you?
What was most challenging for you and why?
What did you enjoy most while working on your artwork?

Reflecting on the gallery:

What did you find interesting, unique, unusual…?
What would you like to ask the artists?

FOLLOW-UP (15 mins)

★ **Language Revision:** Ask students how many words for jobs related to art they remember from the beginning of the lesson. Give them a minute to think silently and count the words in their heads. Then, ask everyone how many they recalled, or have them raise their hand if they remember more than 5, more than 10, etc. Ask them to share which words they remember, and then add any they didn´t.

★ Thank students and yourself for the lesson. Ask students some of the following questions which will make them think of the benefits of being in nature. If it is difficult for them to express themselves in English, feel free to use your native language. Here are some suggested questions:

Whose mood is still good or even better than before the lesson? What has helped you?
Who feels more energy now than before? What has helped?
How do you feel about having lessons outside the classroom, in nature?

IDEAS FOR FOLLOWING LESSONS, PROJECTS AND HOME ASSIGNMENTS

- ★ **Photographers:** Ask students to become photographers and take 5 photos of nature in places they often visit or near their homes. These could be photos of the same place at different times or 5 different photos. They can decide to create a "forest corner/gallery" at their school with their printed photos.
- ★ **Recorders (Sound producers):** Have students record 1 minute of forest sounds and then play it during the lesson.
- ★ **Thank you letter / note:** Writing a letter to nature (Mother Nature)
- ★ **Birds around us:** Download an app to identify the sounds of birds (e.g., Merlin Bird ID) and find out which birds are near your home or school.
- ★ **Making posters:** Students can find information on new jobs for 21st century and create posters or presentations on them
- ★ **An artist profile:** Ask students to prepare a presentation on an artist who connects art and nature or environment. Short films or documentaries can increase students´ interest.

Developing digital skills:

- **Online quiz:** Students can create an online quiz using details from their nature photos, challenging their classmates to guess what each photo depicts.
- **Video:** Students record a video in a forest and edit it afterwards.
- **Presentation / Poster:** Ask students to make a creative presentation or a poster of an artist who works with or draws inspiration from the natural environment.

IDEAS FOR PROJECT DAYS:

You can develop a one-day or multi-day project based on this lesson plan. You can work on the project individually or collaborate with teachers from other subjects to create a more comprehensive and enriching learning experience. Depending on your students' level of English, the project can be conducted entirely in English or partly in their native language.

Feel free to draw inspiration from the ideas provided above or create new concepts based on your group's knowledge and needs. New ideas may also emerge through discussions with other teachers. You can use any AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT) as a starting point for yourself or your students. Select a field that interests you and serves as the project's topic. The project can integrate teaching English with other subjects such as Music, Arts, or Literature. AI can assist in discovering artists or generating specific activity ideas.

Here are some ideas for AI prompts focused on nature, art and global perspective at the same time:

- ★ *Make a list of 20...*
  - *contemporary artists from around the world who creatively connect art and nature.*
  - *musicians and composers who draw inspiration from nature.*
  - *Asian landartists. (or any other region you want to explore)*
  - *jewelry designers who create pieces that are strongly connected with natural materials*
  - *photographers whose nature photography has had a significant impact on people and the world*
  - *African poets whose work often connects with nature.*
- ★ *Imagine you are a teacher. Suggest fun and engaging activities that connect poems and nature for 12-year-olds, both at school and outdoors.*
- ★ *Write ideas for some creative and engaging activities for 15-year-olds to do with famous photographers' photos of nature and the environment.*
- ★ *Suggest some engaging and age-appropriate video project ideas for 11-year-olds that connect nature and art.*