

Think like an Ancestor SESSION 4 (Future Thinking) [KS3, 50 mins]

Learning Objective:

To understand the impact of 'short termism' on the health of our planet and societies, and to explore the benefits of taking a longer view on how we work and live.

Key Environmental Concept: Future Thinking

Short termism is at the root of many of the challenges we face as a Planet, from overconsumption, instant gratification, to habitat destruction and social injustices. By growing our capacity to care for the long term, we can inspire better action today, the positive impacts of which will reverberate long after we're gone.

KS3/4 History Curriculum Statement:

- National Curriculum History KS 3/4: Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901; e.g. 'Britain as the first industrial nation – the impact on society'

KS3 PSHE curriculum

- Money and Careers L3: to set realistic yet ambitious targets and goals

Assessment Statements

By the end of this unit...

- ⇒ all students should understand the difference between short-termism and long term thinking.
- ⇒ most students will be able to name at least one 'ancestor' who has made a difference.
- ⇒ some students should be able to draw connections between natural history, industrial heritage and current challenges including the Earth crisis.

Resources: Paper, pen

Key vocab: 7 Generations Principle, Ancestor,

Session Plan:

1. Review key concepts & learning from sessions 1, 2 & 3 [10 mins]

- a) How does the Earthshot prize promote long time thinking and support the seven generations principle?
- b) What did Octavia Hill do to promote long time thinking and support the seven generations principle?

7 Generations Principle

Decisions being made about our energy, water, and natural resources should be sustainable for seven generations in the future.

The 7 Generations Principle originates with the Haudenosaunee, a group of First Nations people in North America.

2. Role Play activities: [25 mins]

- a) Meet Ancestor 2 Robert Thurston Hopkins: students will role-play a conversation between Robert Thurston Hopkins and a present day person. (See below Appendix G for instructions & Appendix H for character sheet).
- b) Meet the Future Beings: in the same groups, students will role-play a conversation between a present day person and a future being from the year 2195. (Appendix J)

3. Individual reflective writing [5 mins]

- a) Students asked to write for 2 minutes about how you feel after doing this activity.
- b) Students talk in their small groups to share reflections.

4. Session Overview: Whole group discussion [10 mins]

- a) Teacher leads a whole group discussion by asking each small group to share one reflection.
- b) Discussion can be further developed using additional prompts/questions as below:
 - One day, you will be the ancestors, so what can you imagine for the next seven generations?
 - What strategies do you think have been successful so far? What should be improved on?
 - Can you think of other laws, treaties, campaigns or societies we should be working on?
 - Who needs to be around the table? If you were in charge, what would you do?

Taking it outside:

Go to a local outdoor space with both natural and human-made elements. List everything you can see and estimate/research how long it has been there and reflect upon the impact for future generations.



APPENDIX G: THINK LIKE AN ANCESTOR - ROLE PLAY SCRIPT FOR ROBERT THURSTON HOPKINS

Based on a ritual called The Seventh Generation from Joanna Macy's Coming Back to Life.

Activity: Meet your Ancestor: in small groups, students will role-play a conversation between an ancestor and a present day person. Students will be provided with a character sheet describing the ancestor, and a script with prompts for the conversation about that ancestor's concerns, actions and long term impact.

- Step 1: choose who will play the character of the ancestor. This person is given the Character Sheets (Appendix F) and decides who they will play. Everyone in the group is given the Script Sheet and finds the one for the chosen character.
- Step 2: the chosen student reads their character sheet to become familiar with their character
- Step 3: the group starts the discussion using the script below
- Step 4: after taking your leave from the ancestor, students move onto activity 3

SCRIPT - MEET YOUR ANCESTOR - Robert Thurston Hopkins

RTH: Robert Thurston Hopkins // PDP: Present Day Person

PDP: Hello ancestor, who are you?

RTH: I'm Robert Thurston Hopkins, what year is this and who are you?

PDP: We are _____, and this is the year 2024. What year are you talking to us from, and what are you up to?

RTH: This is 1927, and I am elated because my fellow Downsmen and I have managed to fundraise £17,000 in just under a month to purchase the land above the Seven Sisters. It was incredible. We were very lucky our friend Alan agreed to land his Moth biplane on the cliffs to publicise the fund-raising campaign. That would be Sir Alan Cobham - the world speed record challenger, who has recently flown from England to Australia. Finally, this beautiful place is saved. Can you believe developers wanted to build on this beautiful land?

PDP: It sounds like an incredible campaign! Today there are still many green places under threat from developers. It sounds like things haven't changed very much. What is your biggest concern right now in 1927?

RTH: My biggest concern is that: *[choose from one of the 3 concerns below:]*

- Our precious landscape is being lost due to the expansion of built areas
- There are so many places that need to be preserved, but there are so few of us
- Planning laws are not robust enough, and the ones that exist are not respected



PDP: Tell me more, what motivates you to try and solve this problem?

RTH: _____ [Imagine Robert's response, who or what is he drawing inspiration from, where does he find the courage and motivation to continue despite the challenges?]

PDP: What was your first step for creating the Society?

RTH: My first step was to campaign to preserve the Seven Sisters from being built on. Tell me please, are they still wild?

PDP: They are!

RTH: Oh how marvellous. Can you describe the world of 2024 to me? And the Society, does it still exist?

PDP: [Describe the world of 2024 to OH in your own words, explaining to him that The South Downs is now a National Park, and that it is in no small part due to the work of the Society, which still exists but is now called Friends of the South Downs.]

RTH: Thank you for sharing your challenges. I'm glad the work we did could help a little, and that others have made it their own to grow and improve.

PDP: Goodbye Robert. Thank you.



APPENDIX H - THINK LIKE AN ANCESTOR CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER SHEET 2: ROBERT THURSTON HOPKINS

Who was Robert Thurston Hopkins?

Robert Thurston Hopkins (1884–1958) was a British writer and ghost hunter. He wrote books about the English Countryside. In 1923, he co-founded The Society of Sussex Downsmen, together with his wife Sibyl and others. The Society he co-founded (now called the Friends of the South Downs) was instrumental in conserving the natural beauty of the South Downs through campaigning, fundraising and hands-on work too, leading to the creation of the South Downs National Park in 2009.

Source and further info:

<https://www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/lifestyle/23290027.rudyard-kipling-friends-saved-seven-sisters/>

What were his main concerns?

- There were no robust planning laws in place to regulate building development
- The natural beauty of the South Downs was at risk of being lost

What did he do that had a significant impact on life in 2023?

As part of the Society of Sussex Downsmen (now the Friends of the South Downs), he successfully campaigned against a proposed development on top of the Seven Sisters cliffs in 1923. Together they fundraised a formidable sum to purchase the land when it went up for sale in 1927, passing it on to the National Trust who declared it inalienable - not transferable - and for free public use indefinitely.

What year is he talking to us from?

He is talking to us from 1927, and together with his colleagues from the society, he has just fundraised enough money to purchase the land above the Seven Sisters, which means it can now be preserved in its natural state..



APPENDIX J: THINK LIKE AN ANCESTOR - ROLE PLAY SCRIPT FOR FUTURE BEINGS

Activity: Meet the Future Beings: in the same groups, the students will role-play a conversation between a present day person and a future being from the year 2195. If possible, students who played the present day person in activities 1 and 2 should play the role of the present day person in activity 3, knowing they have now become the ancestors of the future beings of 2195.

For this exercise: the teacher should ask students to grant them two assumptions:

- That the Earth is thriving in 2195, because humans over the 7 generations from now to 2195 made good decisions.
- That they have a cultural memory of what happened in our present day, either through universities or storytelling.

PDA: Present Day Ancestor // FB: Future Being

FB: Hello, my name is ____ I'm a person from 2195. It is amazing to meet you dear ancestor - all my life I have heard stories about the time you are living in, and what you did for us. Can you describe what the world is like in 2024 for you?

PDA: [describe in your own words, then ask: What is the world like in 2195?

FB: The world has changed a lot in 7 generations. Things are still not perfect, but we're still here. There is more justice, a lot of nature has been restored and we can drink from the rivers. We no longer judge others through their possessions, but through what good they contribute to their community. There is more solidarity, which is good as though we have done a lot to regenerate our world, the climate can still be unpredictable.

Tell me, what was your biggest concern in 2024?

PDA: You can choose from the below or add your own.

- Rising sea levels
- Loss of biodiversity
- Rising wealth gap

FB: That sounds difficult, what type of work was happening in 2024 that gave you some hope in the midst of the worries and anxiety?

PDA: choose your own or from the below:

- Nature conservation projects
- New technologies making things more efficient
- Social Justice - preservation of traditional indigenous ways of life



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

FB: [Find some words of encouragement for your ancestor to help them navigate the challenging times they are facing - you can use your own or read the below]

Keep going - it's hard right now, but it's worth it. A small action now can make a huge difference for the future. What you do WILL matter, even if you don't see the benefits straightaway.



TEACHERS' NOTES:

Option to introduce new character sheets to support: authors, politicians, unionists, miners, environmentalists, botanists, farmers - how do they live? What do they know? What motivates them? Who is supporting them/derailing them? What's their impact 10, 25, 100 years on?)

Leading towards discussion around motivations - shared with other groups by spokesperson (Where did they draw inspiration from? How did they find the courage to do what they did? What was their first step?)

Possible other ancestors:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasance_Pendred

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Kimmins

Mayor of Colour - Tehmtan Framroze

<https://black-history.org.uk/blackhistory/brightons-first-and-only-mayor-of-colour/>

<https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2017/01/06/tributes-paid-to-charming-former-mayor-of-brighton/>

Katrina Murray - Greening Arundel climate action group

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/how-a-south-downs-town-is-taking-action-for-nature-and-climate/>

Additional Resources to explore this topic

<https://www.thelongtimeproject.org/>

<https://macmacartney.com/portfolio/thechildrensfire/>

<https://www.ecoresolution.earth/resources/seven-generation-thinking>

Video by Roman Krznaric: "[How to be a good ancestor](#)"

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law>

Quotes:

Oren Lyons Native American chief of the turtle island clan of the Onondaga nation, part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy:

"We are looking ahead, as is one of the first mandates given us as chiefs, to make sure every decision that we make relates to the welfare and well-being of the seventh generation to come, and that is the basis by which we make decisions in council. We consider: will this be to the benefit of the seventh generation."

Roman Krznaric, *The Good Ancestor*:

"There is an Apache saying, 'We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.' In the end it is not just our own children, but all children who will judge us from the future."



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

A legacy is not something that we *leave* but something that we *grow* throughout our lives. It is not just a bequest written into a will, but a daily practice. We grow our legacy as parents and friends, as workers and citizens, as creators and activists and as members of communities. It is about being mindful of the consequences of our actions into the distant future, whether through the way we shop or the way we vote. It is about passing on a world that is fit for the flourishing of life. It is about planting acorns in the ground on behalf of those yet to come.”