



Creating Natural Connections Literacy



CUMBERNAULD LIVING LANDSCAPE

Cumbernauld is incredibly green - over 50% of the town is open space, which includes parks, nature reserves and much more.

The Cumbernauld Living Landscape team are improving these outdoor spaces for people and wildlife and helping everyone in the community connect with nature on their doorstep.

Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a partnership between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, The Conservation Volunteers and Sanctuary Scotland, James Hutton Institute.

In January 2019, we were awarded a £1.37 million National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, along with generous support from North Lanarkshire Council and other donors, amounting to a £2.1 million investment in a four-year programme putting wildlife and people at the heart of Cumbernauld's future.

This funding allows the Cumbernauld Living Landscape team to deliver transformational improvements to Cumbernauld's environment with a long-term change in the way the town's people connect with nature. Our collaboration with the community and local schools, countryside rangers, landscape architects, and landowners is key to our success.

We have a long history of working closely with the local community. Since 2013, we've been working together to improve Cumbernauld's outdoor spaces including improving accessibility to parks, restoring peat bogs to reduce flooding, creating wildflower meadows to support insects, connecting young people to nature through outdoor education sessions, improving woodlands by planting native tree species, and supporting health and wellbeing through our Wild Ways Well programme.

We continue to seek funding to enable us to work in partnership ensuring our activities remain responsive to the needs of the community and instil long-term community ownership.

PROJECT
PARTNERS



FUNDERS



Contents

Introduction	2
Single sentence poetry session in depth:	3
What's in the bag?	4
Journey sticks.....	5
The story of an apple	6
Story stones	9
Give a reading about nature	10
Curriculum links for all activities.....	13

Introduction

Welcome to the Curriculum for Excellence outdoor learning methods for literacy. The following activities can be used by education practitioners as a tool to integrate and explore outdoor learning with literacy. You can find a wide range of activities online and we have included some of them here and we have created some new ones too.

As an educator you know your children, where they are and the learning path they are on. You also know the Curriculum for Excellence, how best to deliver that. These are simple exercises that can be adapted for all ages and school years as you see fit. It will still have the same impact across all ages.

What drives our desire to provide CPD for educators?

There is a growing mental health issue occurring in the UK affecting 1 in 10 young people. This is often due to factors in their lives including but not limited to worries about body image, poverty, bullying, physical or mental abuse, parental breakups, and bereavement. Incredibly 70% of young people are living through this without interventions at the appropriate time or age (Mental Health Foundation 2020).

Children are aware of the hierarchy in lessons. Peter is the best at Maths or Amy at English but that boils down to the children thinking that they are not good at this subject, they feel silly or fear that they may be ridiculed if they ask a question, it is simply not the case, they just learn differently. These invisible children are all around us. When you put them into the outdoor learning environment, that hierarchy is gone, they all have equity and have the opportunity to become excellent.

As a conservation charity you may wonder why we care about outdoor learning? The simple fact of the matter is that when people, regardless of age, are healthy, enjoy the outdoors and understand the benefits that nature and the environment give to them, they appreciate their experiences, nature, and the environment more. We believe that this appreciation builds to respect for that environment and a level of stewardship, enabling the individual to care more, take action and promote our valuable greenspaces. Together people and nature can thrive and learn.

Thank you!

Tracy Lambert

Project Manager – Cumbernauld Living Landscape

Funded through National Lottery Heritage Fund

Continuing Professional Development

Single sentence poetry

Session in depth:

This activity encourages young people to examine a subject in nature on their own. For example, let's look at a tree. Each student examines the tree then creates a sentence about the tree. The group then comes together and collates the work into a poem with each sentence becoming a line of that poem. In a large group the task of the young people is to group together lines to make multiple stanzas or separate poems with common themes.

Materials required:

Pen/pencil

Location:

local greenspace

Paper cut into thin strips, enough for a sentence (and something to lean on for writing)

Instructions:

Educator instructs the group to choose an object in nature to study for 10 minutes. If the class is large split into smaller groups and set them off to study different subjects in nature. Ask them to really look at what they have chosen. Does it have a smell? What does it look like? Does it trigger any memories? Have they ever seen it before? Is it new? Do they know what it is?

Once they have thought about these topics ask them to write a simple sentence about one element of the subject they choose to study. The group then brings together all the sentences together via the strips of paper. This is where the group can become creative and move the sentences around. Where do they fit is there a natural succession? Does the poem flow?

Ask one person in each group to scribe the full poem and another to read out their collective work.

Questions:

What did you look at?

How can you describe this (the subject of study) to me?

Why did you choose the subject e.g., tree, flower?

Reflections:

Educator asks the participants how each role felt? Do they understand what they were trying to achieve? How can it be different next time?

Continuing Professional Development

What's in the bag?

Session in depth:

This session is aimed at encouraging questions about the shape, colour, texture, weight etc of an item chosen from the bag, held in the bag, and concealed from the rest of the class. Please note the bag needs to be big enough to enable the child to do this.

It is also a way for the child who has chosen the item to express their thoughts and descriptions about the shape, colour, feel etc and extend that to the class through their own words.

Materials required:

A dark pillowcase or dark bag

Natural materials collected on a walking trip

Location:

In class or outside

Instructions:

Take the class on a walk around the school grounds or if able, outwith the school grounds to collect a number of **non-living** items from nature, e.g., seeds, pinecones, pine needles, stones, shells, feathers, bones etc. Return to the school and wash and dry them all thoroughly. Leave them for a few days or weeks even. The idea is that the children forget about the items they collected.

Place the items into the dark bag or pillowcase. Choose a child to come forward in the class and pick an item. It is important that the item stays in their hand in the bag, it may be possible to create a screened area using a large cardboard box open at one end which faces the child with the chosen item. It could be fun to decorate the box with pictures or even words that are used for describing items. This would encourage children to read clues and express their thoughts, especially if they were looking for a particular word. Another fun session in itself!

The class is given opportunities to guess the item and once correctly guessed another child and item are chosen to repeat the process. This could also be extended to the full class to offer them the opportunity to come up with other terms that the item could be described with.

Questions:

How does the item feel? Is it heavy? Smooth? Cold?

What colour is the item?

How does it smell? Put nose to item not item to nose as the class will see it!

If you tap it, does it make a noise?

Reflections:

How easy or difficult was it to describe the item? Does this improve over time?

Continuing Professional Development

Journey sticks

Session in depth:

The class goes for a walk, along the journey they find a stick. This stick is no ordinary stick. It is the story of their experience outside with nature. This stick can become their memory of that walk. Now the stick can be as long as the child is tall or it can be small and easy to hold or carry. The children are each responsible for their sticks and should look after them, take them back to class and even clean and decorate them.

Materials required:

None – go find a stick

Location:

Local greenspace (woodland is better).

Instructions:

Each child is instructed to find a stick. This can be individual or as a group with each child passing the stick along once they have found a memory to adorn it. The memories are items that they find along the way that they find interesting. For some that is a whole load of items, for others the stick is fine. The idea is to clean, decorate and add their memories to the stick about their walk.

But they need to be able to hold all their items in one hand and the stick in the other (this will stop the classroom from being inundated with items from outside!)

Questions:

Where did you walk to? Could the route be shown on a map?

What did you see, hear or smell along the way? Our sense of smell has a way of triggering memories. These memories linger longer because of that connection.

What was the first item you found and why did you find it interesting?

Can you remember where you found it? Can you show where it was on the map?

If you go back to the same place, do you think you will build more memories, or will they be the same?

Reflections:

How well did the class settle into finding items (memories)?

Can the children remember their walk and items after one week/month etc?

Continuing Professional Development

The story of an apple

Session in depth:

Each child has an apple. The following script can be used to describe many things about the apple.

Materials required:

A **red** apple for each child
(children can bring their own)

Location:

Best outside sitting on the grass under trees

Instructions

Each child has a red apple in their hands. Instruct them not to eat it but to listen to your words and follow the instructions as they are told in the story. Make the apple fascinating for them through the following script.

Script:

Today we are going to go time travelling. We're going to do it right here, right now, wherever you are. Time travelling is a tricky business, so you'll need some special equipment – but not a DeLorean or a Police Call Box, nothing so complex as that. You'll need a red(Ish) apple, and a comfy place to stand or sit – preferably outdoors, where you can see trees and the sky.

Take your apple. Hold it in your hand, feel the textures of it, how smooth the skin is, how firm the flesh. Take in the colours, the subtle shading. Smell it, feel its weight. Experience it.

An apple is an amazing thing.

The first apples, as we know them today, were cultivated around 5000 years ago in the Tian Shan mountains on the Northern borders of what is now China. One farmer, perhaps a family, decided to put down roots, set up a home and grow apples. Maybe to eat themselves, maybe to trade, maybe just for the joy of growing. We can never know. They took a wild ancestor of the modern apple and domesticated it to make them easier to grow and harvest. And then slowly from that one farm the knowledge of apple growing spread and through generations of farmers all over the world we were given all the different colours and varieties we enjoy today.

But they all came from those first apples, and that first farmer. There is a direct unbroken link from the apple you are holding in your hand, through seed, tree, apple, seed, tree, apple, seed, tree, apple... all the way back to the apple they are holding in their hand. Generation upon generation of work, toil, and love from your hand to his (or hers!). Standing there on the edge of the mountains, holding a seed, and considering where to plant a tree.

You've just travelled backwards 5000 years in time and crossed thousands of miles in space. But we want to go further.

Consider the feel of the apple in your hand. Roll it in your palm, grasp it so your fingers surround it, and it nestles in your grip. Notice how well it fits there, how your hand and fingers work together to hold it. Your hand was made to hold that apple. That apple was made to be held by you. Natural processes, evolution, acting over millions of years gave you the perfect tool to grasp and pull this fruit from the tree. And the same processes, acting on behalf of the tree, made the apple the perfect shape for your hand to grasp. You want to eat the apple to survive and grow strong, the apple 'wants' to be eaten by you so its seeds – spread by you because you have eaten the fleshy part – can grow strong trees and more apples.

Two organisms (you and the apple) coming together for shared benefit, a perfect symbiotic dance, whirling in partnership through aeons of time.

Take a look at your apple. Notice the subtle variations in colour, the reds fading into greens, oranges and yellows. Examine it, drink in the colours and the shades. You are one of the very few organisms on this planet that can see and appreciate those colours. Human eyes can detect shades of red and yellow that few other animals can. Our eyes evolved that way so that we could tell when apples (and other fruits) are ripe and ready to eat. And as our eyes evolved to see the apple, so the apple evolved so that only we, and a few others, could see it.

The music swells, and another step is added to our dance.

Now – finally – take a bite of your apple! Notice how perfectly your jaw and your teeth, working together, can pierce the apple's protective skin and take a crisp, clear bite. Your teeth are your toolbox, and you have been provided with exactly the right tools for working with this apple. It is just the right firmness, just the right consistency, so your teeth can cut right through. Sharp teeth for cutting the flesh, flat teeth to grind it and chew it and pull out the nutrients inside.

Chew your apple slowly. Feel the satisfying crunch. Savour the sweet juices that burst out of the apple's flesh, roll them around your tongue, delight in the sensations. Tiny little sensors on your tongue, your taste buds, are detecting the sweetness of the apple and they are transmitting that information to your brain where all sorts of incredible reactions are taking place, huge amounts of processing power, greater than any supercomputer, are analysing the taste of the apple, turning it into information – and telling you that this is good!

Think about that for a moment. Once again you are one of the very few organisms that exist, or that has ever existed, that can really taste that sugary sweet goodness. Your tongue is telling you that this apple is good to eat – because the apple is designed to give you those signals. You and the apple are linked together, neither could exist in this form without the other. You want to eat the apple and the apple 'wants' to be eaten by you.

This didn't happen overnight. This process of evolution, each species acting on and influencing the other – and acting on and influencing the millions of other organisms all around us - has been going on for millions, billions of years. An incredibly complex system of measures, countermeasures, weights, checks and balances that over untold generations of people and apples, working in harmony, ended with you, sitting here now, savouring this apple.

Our time machine just jumped a little further.

But we can go further even than this.

What is the apple made from? How does an apple come to be?

Apples are made of the same stuff you are. An apple tree takes water and minerals from the ground, carbon dioxide from the air sunlight from the sky and makes apples. We don't really know how it does that. We know that photosynthesis turns light energy into chemical energy and that this energy can be stored by the plant in things like sugars. But we can't replicate it. No human made factory can churn apples out on production lines. No scientist in the world can make you an apple from sunlight.

Just sunlight. A flaming ball of hydrogen, millions of miles away in space. Yet when you eat that apple, it becomes part of you. The sugar from that apple will go to power your muscles and your cells, some of it will be stored for future use – so you will be using this apple long after it's gone. The material from this apple will be used to power your body, to maintain it, to rebuild it. To keep you being you. You and the apple are one, you can never again be split apart.

Finish your apple. Consider every mouthful. Enjoy it, savour it.

When you are ready you can get up and walk away and get on with your daily life, our time machine has returned to the present – but know when you do that within you are carrying concentrated sunlight and all the lessons, lives and dreams of a million ancestors, made possible by your unbreakable relationship with the natural world around you.

And perhaps, if you were able to look really deep inside you, you might be able to see the mountains, that first orchard full of fruit, and deep within it, enjoying the view, a figure sitting at rest, beneath an apple tree.

Questions:

Stories have been told for thousands of years they create emotions in us that drive our interest, from this story who could see the orchard in the mountains, could you feel the cool breeze that would blow in the orchard or the sun warming the leaves. What did you feel from the story?

Amazingly it is not just apples that we could create stories such as this from what story could you create?

Good stories become great stories when they are linked to truths and facts. Would you consider the story as true and factual or a tall tale? It is true.

What did you think about the descriptions of the apple, can you see that by adding them it makes the apple more interesting?

Reflections:

This session can be used for so many subjects, science, history, arts, mental health, and wellbeing.

Could your class try to grow from the seeds of their apple and plant the beginnings of a new orchard for their future children?

How do they react to thinking that far ahead?

Continuing Professional Development

Story stones

Session in depth:

Story stones are a great way to spark imagination. Young people today often have difficulty having social interactions, with many selectively muting. The artwork on the stones is not important but rather the stories that it can help draw out. The art could be a matchstick figure, a cloud, musical note, anything that pops into their heads within reason. It could even be a simple mark, but better if it is a drawing of some sort. Once the art is on the stones they are sealed and left to dry. The stones can then be placed in a bag (pillowcase is fine). Each participant takes out a stone and makes up a simple sentence about the picture on their stone. This continues around the group with the story following on from the person before. The accumulation of sentences can be noted down to create the full story.

Materials required:

Flat stones

Pens for stone art

PVA glue to seal

Location:

Indoors

Instructions:

Take a stone and unleash the imagination. Both sides of the stone can be used to add depth or choice to each tale. Have someone recording the story either in written word or using technology – but remember to write it out later. Put the story together and see how everyone contributed to the bigger picture.

Each story can have an associated comic strip drawn by a participant and these could even become a booklet for the group, school funds or just a community project. The choice is in the hands of the participants.

Questions:

Ideas for stones: What inspires you in nature? What is your favourite native plant or native wildlife?

What is the weather like today?

Can you draw a sound, action, or emotion?

Reflections:

Did the group make a continuous story? Did they enjoy the experience Do they think they could use that to connect with the wider community?

Continuing Professional Development

Give a reading about nature

Session in depth:

This session takes the class or group outside to listen to a poem about nature. The one chosen is 'The way through the woods' by Rudyard Kipling. This is an opportunity for the students to relax, listen and unlock their imagination:

They shut the road through the woods seventy years ago
Weather and rain have undone it again, and now you would never know
There was once a road through the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath, and the thin anemones,
only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods, and the badgers roll at ease
There was once a road through the trees.

Yet, if you enter the woods of a summer's evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods, because they see so few)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet and the swish of a skirt in the dew.
Steadily cantering through the misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew the old lost road through the woods.

But there is no road through the woods.

Materials required:

Something to sit on

Location:

Somewhere quiet and free of distraction

Instructions:

Read out the poem or ask a student to read it out. Have a printout for everyone. Read out the first stanza again. Can your students see this woodland where once a road went through? Can they imagine a place in their town, near where they live that this has happened? Is it relatable?

Try different methods of telling the same poem, narrate it like a whisper, normally or loud. Does this invoke different feelings? How do the children describe these differences?

Can the children act out the scene?

Questions:

Why do they think the road was shut?

Do the children know all the words? What are anemones? – (wild woodland flowers)

Follow up with the Lost Words book

Is it a better place now?

How does it function? – a road would allow for the transport of people and goods to and fro whereas a wood functions as a home, shelter, a place to play and find food, a place for family.

Seventy years is a long time. What do the children think would happen to a road here in their town if it were left for 70 years? Would it be the same as the poem?

What is coppice or heath? Pull out the words that the class do not know and explore what they are together.

Find the sound of an otter whistle online. What does that sound like? When is mating season? Can you pin down when the poem was written for? Do otters mate in late summer? Introduce critical thinking.

Become detectives. Why is the skirt important in this poem? Is it important? Could it tell us something of this time? If the animals do not see many men but there are women in the woods (swish of a skirt) why are the women there? Probably foraging!

The significance of this is that by listening carefully we might be able to tell when a certain poem took place, what time period, how different are customs, dress etc. All things to be considered and can be linked to history or geography easily.

The last line is very special, this poem has spoken about an old road and how nature has taken it back. It has built descriptions about the animals you can find there. It is quite emotive, invoking memories and then at the end the poet tells you there is no road through the woods.

Reflections:

Does the poem invoke emotions?

Is it a place they would like to visit? Is there a place that the children know near to home that is like this for them? Do they visit it a lot and if so, why?

Did they like it better when it was spoken as a whisper, normal or loud and why?

Can the children write a short poem about nature?

Many poems or stories can be taken apart like this. It helps the listener or reader to learn about how words can cause emotions or memories to be triggered for effect when writing. It can also add interest.

Take the lesson outside where there are trees and plants and build the environment of the story with the environment the children are sitting in.

Ideas for story stones



Curriculum links for all activities

Activity	Equipment required	Key links to curriculum
Single sentence poetry	Paper and pencil	LIT 1-01a / LIT 2-01a - LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-13a/LIT 2-13a LIT 1-14a/LIT 2-14a – LIT 1-15a/LIT 2-15a – LIT 1-16a/LIT 2-16a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a
What's in the bag	A dark bag or pillowcase	LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a
Journey sticks	Paints, glue, string	LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a
The story of an apple	Apples	LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-07a/LIT 2-07a – LIT1-08a/LIT 2-08a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-13a/LIT 2-13a LIT 1-14a/LIT 2-14a – LIT 1-15a/LIT 2-15a – LIT 1-16a/LIT 2-16a LIT 1-18a/LIT 2-18a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a
Story stones	Stones Acrylic pens	LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a
Give a reading about nature	Something to sit on or space to act out the poem	LIT1-01a / LIT 2-01a - LIT 2-02a LIT 1-04a/LIT 2-04a - LIT 1-05a/LIT 2-05a - LIT 1-06a/LIT 2-06a LIT 1-07a/LIT 2-07a – LIT1-08a/LIT 2-08a LIT 1-09a/LIT 2-09a - LIT 1-10a/LIT 2-10a LIT 1-13a/LIT 2-13a LIT 1-14a/LIT 2-14a – LIT 1-15a/LIT 2-15a – LIT 1-16a/LIT 2-16a LIT 1-20a/LIT 2-20a

Additional links	Key links to curriculum
Mental health and wellbeing	Mental health and wellbeing HWB 0-06a/ HWB 1-06a/ HWB 2-06a/ HWB 3-06a/ HWB 4-06a HWB 0-07a/ HWB 1-07a/ HWB 2-07a/ HWB 3-07a/ HWB 4-07a HWB 0-08a/ HWB 1-08a/ HWB 2-08a/ HWB 3-08a/ HWB 4-08a

References

Mental Health Foundation, 2020, Children and young people, Mental health for all, <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/c/children-and-young-people>

Piccininni C., Michaelson V., Janssen I. and Pickett W., 2018, Outdoor play and nature connectedness as potential correlates of internalised mental health symptoms among Canadian adolescents,

Notes



Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a partnership between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, Sanctuary Scotland, the James Hutton Institute and TCV – The Conservation Volunteers.

cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

5-7 Napier Way, Wardpark North,
Cumbernauld, G68 0EH

T 01236 617113

E cumbernauldl@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

f CumbernauldLivingLandscape

@WildCumbernauld

Partners



Funders



Cumbernauld Living Landscape is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a Scottish registered charity (charity no. SC005792) and a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland (registered no. SC040247). Wild Ways Well is provided by TCV, registered as a charity in Scotland (SC039302).