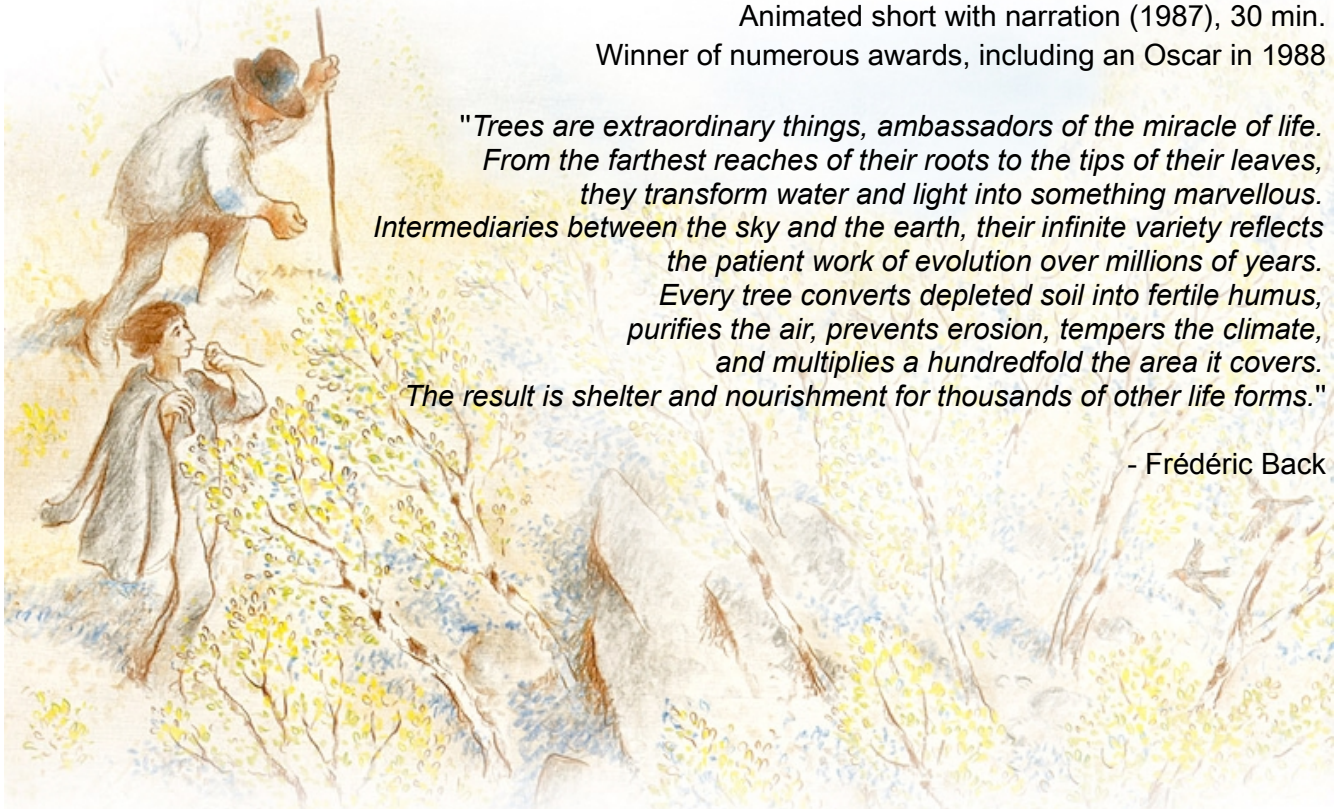


The Man Who Planted Trees Activity Kit

THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES – Frédéric Back

Animated short with narration (1987), 30 min.

Winner of numerous awards, including an Oscar in 1988



"Trees are extraordinary things, ambassadors of the miracle of life. From the farthest reaches of their roots to the tips of their leaves, they transform water and light into something marvellous. Intermediaries between the sky and the earth, their infinite variety reflects the patient work of evolution over millions of years. Every tree converts depleted soil into fertile humus, purifies the air, prevents erosion, tempers the climate, and multiplies a hundredfold the area it covers. The result is shelter and nourishment for thousands of other life forms."

- Frédéric Back

FILM SYNOPSIS

The Man Who Planted Trees is about the unique achievement of Elzéard Bouffier, a Provençal shepherd who patiently reforests a barren piece of land. The narrator's fascination with the man and his mission leads him to return time and again to the mountains, where he sees the windswept, forsaken landscape gradually transformed: springs, cultivated fields and thriving villages are regenerated by the incredible forest that is the tenacious work of one uncommonly selfless man.

THE MESSAGE

For Frédéric Back, trees are extraordinary things, ambassadors of the miracle of life. From the farthest reaches of their roots to the tips of their leaves, they transform water and light into something marvellous. Intermediaries between the sky and the earth, their infinite variety reflects the patient work of evolution over millions of years. Every tree converts depleted soil into fertile humus, purifies the air, prevents erosion, tempers the climate, and multiplies a hundredfold the area it covers. The result is shelter and nourishment for thousands of other life forms, engendering the incalculable richness and diversity of this world. "Benefactors, masterpieces, symbols of endurance," trees populate the forests, whose great age, size and benefits to humanity have always been a source of inspiration and a place to commune with the beauty of creation.

The Man Who Planted Trees also stands as a metaphor for all the things we can do for the environment or for others in our community. Even the smallest actions make a big difference over time.

ACTIVITY KIT OVERVIEW

The Man Who Planted Trees educational activity kit consists of five workshops. The first, “On Trees,” encourages students to consider the importance of trees. “On Happiness” has them think about what makes the shepherd happy and then what contributes to their own happiness, after which they will conduct a survey of those around them. The third workshop, “On Values,” asks them to analyze the values of Elzéard Bouffier, the man who planted trees, and then think about their own values. In “On the Power of Small Actions,” they will try to find examples of “tree planters” in their community and think about the impact small actions can have. In the last workshop, “On Citizen Action,” they will develop a social or environmental citizen action project they can undertake in their own community.

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The five workshops are designed for kids age 8 to 14, in the classroom or in a more informal setting. The activities can be adapted to suit the particular age group, if necessary.

OBJECTIVES

- To become aware of certain environmental and/or social issues;
- To learn about or research these issues – their causes, consequences and solutions;
- To discover activist art through animation films;
- To think about the importance of trees, happiness, values, small actions and becoming involved in one’s community;
- To develop a sense of citizen responsibility;
- To express one’s values orally, in writing and through artwork;
- To think of concrete things that could be done in daily life to help change behaviours;
- To act locally, taking small actions that could make a difference to the community or the environment;
- To appreciate the contribution of young people or others in the community who are “tree planters” in their day-to-day lives.

COMPETENCIES

Intellectual

- to use information
- to solve problems
- to exercise critical judgment
- to use creativity

Methodological

- to adopt effective work methods
- to use information and communication technologies (ICT)

Personal and social

- to construct their identity
- to co-operate with others

Communication-related

- to communicate appropriately

AREAS OF LEARNING

- Oral and written communication
- Arts
- Environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities
- Citizenship and community life
- Health and well-being
- Media literacy

DURATION AND ORGANIZATION

The activity kit was developed in such a way that the five workshops follow logically from an educational point of view. They can be done one right after the other or spread out over several months. Although the activity kit has been developed as a set, the individual workshops can also be done on their own. Each workshop is also subdivided into preliminary activities, primary activities and enrichment activities.

WORKSHOPS



ACTIVITY KIT WRITERS

Inês Lopes (educational consultant), Québec'ERE and Pierre Jobin (spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animator)

English translator: Janet Chapman

Workshop 1: On Trees



OBJECTIVE

To seek information on and think about the importance of trees and then express themselves on this subject through the visual arts and in writing. Also, to become aware of the importance of promoting sustainable development (or ecodevelopment) and reducing the consumption of natural resources.

MATERIALS

- Film: *The Man Who Planted Trees*
- Appendix 1: *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg* (pdf)
- Computer with Internet access: fredericback.com website > Activist section > To Save the Forests <http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/proteger-forets/index.en.shtml>
- Visual arts materials for the chosen medium (drawing, collage, engraving, sculpture, etc.)
- Paper
- Crayons or coloured pencils

ACTIVITIES

Preliminary activities

Preliminary activity 1: Initial questions about trees

Ask the class these initial questions:

- When you hear the word “trees” or “forest,” what do you think of?
- Where are trees found? (In the country? In the city?)
- Trees are important for various reasons. Can you name some of these reasons?

Preliminary activity 2: Watch the film The Man Who Planted Trees

Watch the film all the way through (30 min.). (If you don't have access to the film, you can view

certain excerpts on the fredericback.com website.)

http://www.fredericback.com/cineaste/filmographie/lhomme-qui-plantait-des-arbres/media_synopsis_V_1243.en.shtml

Primary activities

Primary activity 1: Creative expression on the importance of trees

Step 1: Read the students the following quote by Frédéric Back:

*"Benefactors, masterpieces, symbols of endurance,
trees populate the forests whose great age,
size and benefits to humanity have always been a source of inspiration
and a place to commune with the beauty of creation."
- Frédéric Back*

Tell the students that it is now their turn to be inspired by trees. After doing a bit of research, they will create an artwork showing the importance of trees. They will also express themselves in writing, creating a poem to accompany their work.

Step 2: Do some research

Before starting on their artwork and poems, the students must first do some research on the importance of trees (e.g. to prevent erosion*; to prevent desertification*; to retain rainwater ; to purify the air; to help keep the soil arable*; to provide animal habitat as part of an ecosystem*; to serve as a source of food for human beings; to provide raw materials for building; to offer a place for relaxation and inspiration, etc.).

The fredericback.com website > Activist section > To Save the Forests could be a good starting point for their research.

<http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/protoger-forets/index.en.shtml>

***Definitions**

Arable: Fit for plowing or tillage.

(Webster Dictionary: <http://www.webster-dictionary.net/definition/Arable>)

Desertification: 1) The development of desert conditions as a result of human activity or climatic changes. 2) The process of land damage which allows the soil to spread like a desert in arid and semi-arid regions.

(European Environment Agency glossary:

http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/concept_html?term=desertification)

Ecosystem: A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

(European Environment Agency glossary:

<http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/sitesearch?term=ecosystem>)

Erosion: The general process or the class of processes whereby the materials of Earth's crust are loosened, dissolved, or worn away and simultaneously moved from one place to another, by natural agencies, which include weathering, solution, corrosion, and transportation, but usually exclude mass wasting.

(European Environment Agency glossary:

<http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/sitesearch?term=erosion>)



Step 3: Create an artwork about trees

Create an artwork showing one or more aspects of the importance of trees. It could be in the form of a drawing, collage, engraving, sculpture, etc.

Step 4: Create a written work about trees

Write a poem about the importance of trees to accompany the artwork.

As two examples, read the students one of them.

Hole in the Forest

when the tree is felled
the bark is made into a boat
the sweetest wood into a lute
the branches roof a house

the hole
where the tree grew
soon greens with fern
the hole in the forest
remains the colour of the sky

and people have
no way of
hiding the tree's huge death
- Michael Dransfield

<http://poetsvegananarchistpacifist.blogspot.com/2009/05/poems-and-their-possible-sources.html>

Trees

Trees are the kindest things I know,
They do no harm, they simply grow
And spread a shade for sleepy cows,
And gather birds among their bows.

They give us fruit in leaves above,
And wood to make our houses of,
And leaves to burn on Halloween
And in the Spring new buds of green.

They are first when day's begun
To touch the beams of morning sun,
They are the last to hold the light
When evening changes into night.

And when a moon floats on the sky
They hum a drowsy lullaby
Of sleepy children long ago...
Trees are the kindest things I know.
- Harry Behn

<http://aloneonalimb.blogspot.com/2007/02/poem-to-start-week-trees.html>

Primary activity 2: Importance of ecodevelopment and reducing the use of natural resources

Step 1: Discussion of a quote by Frédéric Back

Read the following Frédéric Back quote to the class:

“I have long been concerned about the lack of respect we show for our fellow human beings, animals, and nature, on which we depend. Almost everything we do is motivated by profit, usually in a short-term perspective; there are tragically few generous, selfless acts.”
- Frédéric Back

Lead a class discussion based on the following questions:

- What do you think of this quote?
- Do we often think in the short term rather than in the long term?
- Do we often fail to respect nature?
- On the other hand, do we also need natural resources (such as wood) to make certain things?
- So what should we do, should we cut down trees or not? (Introduce the idea of sustainable development* or ecodevelopment.)
- In your opinion, do trees “belong” to anyone?
- If trees don’t belong to anyone, if they are part of the public good, do people often act as if they were their “property”?

***Definition**

Sustainable development: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of ‘needs,’ in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

(Brundtland Report, 1987, in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brundtland_Commission)

Note: Some people prefer to use term “ecodevelopment” rather than “sustainable development,” which is often misused to justify initiatives that have more to do with “development” than “sustainability.”

Step 2: Read and discuss the story *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg*

Ask some of the students to read the story *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg* (Appendix 1) aloud to the rest of the class.

Lead a class discussion based on the following questions:

- What is the moral of the story?
- Does it have any relation to the theme of trees? In what way? (If unlimited cutting is done, that could be unsustainable, leading to the depletion of certain forests. Selective cutting is more

- ecological. Also, if we consume less, we have less need to use our natural resources.)
- What are the consequences of overcutting forests? (e.g. Clear-cutting makes the soil less fertile, which harms regrowth; loss of forests also results in a loss of animal habitat, thus creating an imbalance in the ecosystem; etc.)

Step 3: Suggest concrete actions to help save trees

What can be done to help save trees? Ask the students to suggest concrete actions they could take themselves.

Step 4: Put these actions into practice

To translate intentions into action, implement certain measures to save trees (e.g. set up a system for reusing printer paper and scrap paper from art projects; ask their school or parents to purchase recycled paper; etc.).

Enrichment activities

Enrichment activity 1: Identify tree species

Ask the students to identify the trees that grow in their immediate environment (on their street, in a park or woods near their home).

The following websites could serve as a starting point:

- <http://www.arboday.org/>
- <http://www.woodlands.co.uk/owning-a-wood/tree-identification/>
- <http://ostermiller.org/tree/species.html>

Enrichment activity 2: Plant some trees

In the spring, have the class plant some trees.

REFERENCES

Atelier Frédéric Back. Website > Activist section > To Save the Forests
<http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/proteger-forets/index.en.shtml>

Back, F. (1987). *The Man Who Planted Trees*. 30 min. English and French. CBC/Radio-Canada. Available in *Frédéric Back Classics* (4-DVD box set, 2007, 240 min.).

Workshop 2: On Happiness



OBJECTIVE

To think about what makes Elzéard Bouffier happy and then think about what contributes to their own happiness. Lastly, to conduct a survey to see what makes those around them happy. For those who want to explore further, the enrichment activity lets them express themselves on the concept of happiness.

MATERIALS

- Appendix 2: Happiness Survey (pdf)
- Paper
- Crayons or coloured pencils
- Optional (for the enrichment activity): visual arts materials for the chosen medium (drawing, collage, sculpture, etc.)

Preliminary activity

Step 1: Write a few words about what makes the shepherd happy

First read the students the following short excerpt about the man who planted trees.

“Before we took our leave, my friend made a small suggestion about the kind of tree which seemed to suit the soil here. He did not press the point, ‘For the simple reason,’ he told me afterwards, ‘that this man knows more about it than I do.’ The thought must have been turning over and over in his mind, for after we had been walking for an hour he added, ‘He knows more about it than anyone else in the world. He has found the perfect way to be happy.’”

- from the book *The Man Who Planted Trees*, by Jean Giono
translated by Jean Roberts

Have the students briefly describe in writing what makes the shepherd happy.

Step 2: Class discussion on the concept of happiness

Ask the class to share their answers about what makes the shepherd happy.

Then ask the students the following questions:

- a) And what makes you happy?
- b) What do you think of the saying “Money can’t buy happiness”?
- c) Complete the sentence “In life, I’m grateful for...”

Then ask them what they think about the following statements:

- d) My happiness depends on me.
- e) My happiness depends on others.
- f) My happiness depends on the environment.
- g) I have a role to play in my own happiness.
- h) I have a role to play in the happiness of others.
- i) I have a role to play in the quality of the environment.

Primary activity

Step 1: Happiness Survey

As homework, have the students conduct a survey on what makes the people around them happy (Appendix 2: Happiness Survey). They should include three people in their survey and ask them the same questions as they were asked in class.

Step 2 (following week): Presentation of the survey results

Present the results of their mini-surveys to the class. (This could be done on the blackboard or orally, depending on the situation.)

Step 3: Discussion of the results and conclusions

Go over the survey results with the students to get them to analyze their own perception of happiness. Help them discover new attitudes or behaviours that would enable them to attain a new kind of happiness, by asking such questions as:

- Is it material or non-material things that make us happy? Visible or invisible things?
- Are we only happy when we receive or also when we give?
- Go back over (d) to (i) of the preliminary activity (“My happiness depends on me/others/my environment, etc.”) to help them look at happiness in a new way.
- Etc.

Enrichment activity

Step 1: The art of happiness

To express their idea of happiness, have the students create one of the following:

- a story
- a poem
- a song
- a drawing
- a collage
- a sculpture
- etc.

Step 2: Exhibition or show

Organize a theme day or evening in order to present the students' creations to their parents or community. The event could be in the form of an exhibition or a performance.

REFERENCES

Back, F. (1987). *The Man Who Planted Trees*. 30 min. English and French. CBC/Radio-Canada. Available in *Frédéric Back Classics* (4-DVD box set, 2007, 240 min.).

Workshop 3: On Values



OBJECTIVE

To understand the concept of “values” and give examples. Then, based on the example of Elzéard Bouffier, the man who planted trees, to think about their own values and those of the people around them. Also, to think about the media’s role in conveying positive or negative values and messages.

MATERIALS

- Appendix 3a: Character Study of an Exceptional Man (pdf)
- Appendix 3b: Identify Elzéard Bouffier’s Values (pdf)
- Appendix 3c: Answer Key – Examples of Elzéard Bouffier’s Values (pdf)
- Appendix 3d: List of Values (cut out the words so that each is on a separate strip of paper) (pdf)
- Materials for drawing (paper and crayons or coloured pencils) or collage (magazines to cut up, paper, scissors and glue)

Preliminary activity

Step 1: Read a quote by Frédéric Back

Explain to the students that Frédéric Back’s film *The Man Who Planted Trees* is based on a book with the same title written by a French author named Jean Giono. Read the students the following quote by Frédéric Back.

Quote 1:

“Some 15 years ago, when I read the story *The Man Who Planted Trees* for the first time, I was very moved by the character’s generosity and his utter indifference to any kind of reward. It is the very essence of happiness because the reward is in the act itself and in the vision of its beneficial consequences.”

- Frédéric Back

Step 2: Class discussion on values (and the media)

Lead a class discussion on values based on the following questions:

- What are values? (Refer to the general definition given in Appendix 3d: List of Values).
- Can you give examples of values?

Also discuss the media's role in conveying positive or negative values and messages. For example:

- Do you think that the media we are exposed to (e.g. books, magazines, television, video games or movies) influence our values?
- What do you think of the two quotes by Frédéric Back? (Reread them, if necessary.)
- Can the media convey negative messages? What about positive messages?

Primary activity

Step 1: Read the character study of Elzéard Bouffier

Ask the students to read the text on Elzéard Bouffier in Appendix 3a: Character Study of an Exceptional Man. (They should also have already watched the film *The Man Who Planted Trees*.)

Step 2: Identify Elzéard Bouffier's values

Divide the students into teams of four and have each team identify the values held by the man who planted trees. They should give reasons for their answers (using Appendix 3b: Identify Elzéard Bouffier's Values). Tell the students to pay careful attention to Elzéard Bouffier – his character traits, his moral and spiritual values, his project and his way of life.

Possible answers are provided in Appendix 3c: Answer Key – Examples of Elzéard Bouffier's Values.

Step 3: Collage/drawing illustrating their own values

It's now the students' turn to think about their own values. Ask them to do a collage or drawing illustrating the values they care about. They can cut out pictures from magazines, do a drawing or create a set of symbols to illustrate their values. This could also be done as a collective work (e.g. create a mosaic of values).

Enrichment activity

Have the students act out values through role-playing or mime.

Step 1: Form teams

Divide the students into pairs and give each pair 1 or 2 words (values) previously cut out of Appendix 3d: List of Values.

Step 2: Prepare the role play/mime

Give the students five minutes to decide how they will act out the value(s) in front of the class.

Step 3: Present the role play/mime to the class

Have each pair present their role play or mime in front of the class. Once the pair has finished acting out a value, the other students can then try to guess what it is.

REFERENCES

Back, F. (1987). *The Man Who Planted Trees*. 30 min. English and French. CBC/Radio-Canada. Available in *Frédéric Back Classics* (4-DVD box set, 2007, 240 min).

Workshop 4: On the Power of Small Actions



OBJECTIVE

To become aware of community-minded people, like the man who planted trees, and to realize the power of small actions.

MATERIALS

- Appendix 4: *The Boy Who Loved Starfish* (pdf)
- Optional (for the enrichment activity): computer with Internet access

Preliminary activity

Step 1: Read two quotes

Read the following two quotes to the students:

Quote 1:

The Man Who Planted Trees is about the unique achievement of Elzéard Bouffier, a Provençal shepherd who patiently reforests a barren piece of land. The narrator's fascination with the man and his mission leads him to return time and again to the mountains, where he sees the windswept, forsaken landscape gradually transformed: springs, cultivated fields and thriving villages are regenerated by the incredible forest that is the work of one stubborn and uncommonly selfless man.

(synopsis of the film *The Man Who Planted Trees*)

Quote 2:

“French writer, filmmaker and humanist Jean Giono (1895-1970) was one of the first to express concern about environmental issues. The seeds that the shepherd plants are the symbol of all our actions, good and bad, which have far-reaching consequences we can scarcely imagine. It is up to us to think and act in accordance with our hopes for the future, and, if possible, to leave behind us a world more beautiful and promising than the one we inherited.”

- Frédéric Back

Step 2: Discussion on “tree planters” in their immediate environment

The man who planted trees achieved great things, gradually, through patience and perseverance, doing one thing at a time, without expecting anything in return and using the means available to him. It’s a fine example of citizen action, of becoming involved in one’s community.

Now ask the students if they are aware of any “tree planters” (in the metaphorical sense of people who have done small actions with a positive social or environmental impact) among their friends and family or in their community. Here are some examples of questions to be asked:

- Do you know of any instances in which one individual made a big difference in his/her environment or the lives of others?
- Can you tell us about an act of generosity you have seen?
- Are these especially powerful or talented individuals, or are they just like you and your family?
- Do they achieve extraordinary things through extraordinary means or do they do small things that lead to big results?

Primary activities

Primary activity 1: Discover and publicize “tree planters” in their immediate environment

Step 1: Identify a community-minded person

Ask the students to identify someone in their family, friends or community who does good actions to benefit the physical or social environment. Keep in mind that such people can sometimes be very discreet. It might be a man who provides support and comfort to the homeless, a child who assists an elderly person, a neighbour who lends a hand to overworked parents, or a woman who regularly cleans up her local park.

Step 2: Document that person’s citizen action

Find out as much information as possible about that person’s community-minded action:

- What does he/she do to help his/her community?
- How long has he/she been doing it?
- What is his/her motivation?
- How many people does it affect?
- What is the positive impact of his/her action?

Step 3: Spread the news

Let the community know about that person. Publicizing his/her positive action could have a ripple effect, encouraging others to make similar efforts. One possibility would be to approach the local newspaper about publishing an article on the person, though it’s very important to request the person’s permission first.

Primary activity 2: Discussion on the power of small actions

Step 1: Discussion on the power of small actions

Based on the great effect of Elzéard Bouffier's small action and the small actions done by people in the students' community, lead them to think about the positive impact small actions can have.

- Read them this maxim: "Listen to the forest grow, rather than the tree fall." What do you think it means? (Answer: Instead of just focusing on problems, we also should pay attention to the good news, small solutions and good actions we see around us.)
- Do you think that a small action can have an impact if it is done by only one person?
- Do you think that a small action can have an impact if it is done only once?

Step 2: Read and discuss the story *The Boy Who Loved Starfish*

In reference to the last question, have three students read aloud the story in Appendix 4, *The Boy Who Loved Starfish*. (Divide it up so that each student reads one paragraph, thus representing the narrator, the man walking on the beach, and the young boy.)

After the reading, ask the students:

- What do you think of the story?
- What is the moral of the story?
- Do you think that one small action can make a difference?
- Even if you can't do everything, is that a reason for doing nothing?

Step 3: A quick calculation of how small actions add up

Do this calculation in class to illustrate the cumulative effect of a small action if it is repeated over time and/or by a number of people. Use the example of a simple action we can all do every day (e.g. turn off the tap when brushing our teeth in order to save water).

Ask the students to calculate the impact this action could have:

- if only one person does it several times a day (2 litres x 3 times a day);
- if one person does it every day for a whole year (multiply the previous answer by 365);
- if many people do it (e.g. multiply the previous answer by the number of students in the class);
- if everyone in the community does it (multiply instead by the number of people in the local population);
- if everyone in the country, continent or world does it.

This will help the students realize that the amount of water used for brushing one's teeth adds up over time and collectively. They will see their two litres increase exponentially – a concrete illustration of the big impact a small action can have.

Step 4: Further discussion on the power of small actions

To sum up the previous discussions, story reading and calculation about the power of small actions and to get the students to take their reflections even further, lead another discussion based on the following questions:

- Can even a small action have a big impact?

- Do we tend to get discouraged if we think we are the only one doing something that will benefit others (e.g. turning off the tap, recycling, bicycling/walking to reduce air pollution, etc.)?
- Do we sometimes feel that our action is just a drop of water in the ocean? (Get them to realize that the ocean is made up of countless drops of water.)
- Can each student be like a drop of water in the ocean?

Step 5: Displaying commitment

Make a poster giving examples of small actions everyone can do at school, at home, in their community, etc. Or make a poster for each action so that the students can write their names under the actions they commit to do.

Enrichment activity

The Man Who Planted Trees illustrates the power of small actions and the positive effects they can have, through the example of its protagonist, Elzéard Bouffier. The film itself is also an excellent example of the power of one small action since when Frédéric Back made his film, he had no idea that it would have such a big impact. The film created a groundswell of environmental awareness and a realization of the potential consequences of our actions.

Have the students research the impact of the film *The Man Who Planted Trees*. The following video clips and documents might be helpful.

- Rewatch the video clip showing the landscape after Elzéard Bouffier spent years patiently planting trees: “The work of Elzéard Bouffier” (excerpt from the animated film *The Man Who Planted Trees*, Radio-Canada, 1987, 01:10). http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/proteger-forets/media_tous-planteurs_V_1247.en.shtml
- Documents on the fredericback.com website in the section To Save the Forests > We Are All Tree-Planters. <http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/proteger-forets/tous-planteurs.en.shtml>

REFERENCES

Atelier Frédéric Back. Website > Activist section > To Save the Forests > We Are All Tree-Planters <http://www.fredericback.com/artiste/position/proteger-forets/tous-planteurs.en.shtml>

Back, F. (1987). *The Man Who Planted Trees*. 30 min. English and French. CBC/Radio-Canada. Available in *Frédéric Back Classics* (4-DVD box set, 2007, 240 min).

Mond’Ami (2001). Story “Le gardien d’étoiles de mer” from the animation file *Pars en quête... loupe en main!* (2000-2001), p. 30.

“The Boy Who Loved Starfish”: This story is quoted widely on the Internet and is likely taken from a story that Joel Barker adapted from Loren Eiseley’s essay “The Star Thrower.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Star_Thrower#Publication_data

Workshop 5: On Citizen Action



OBJECTIVE

To experience citizen action in their own community, becoming “tree planters” too, by developing a project to help their physical and social environment.

MATERIALS

Appendix 5: Project Info Sheet (pdf)

Preliminary activity

Step 1: Identify problems in the immediate environment

Ask the students to identify problems they have noticed in their community. Write these problems on the blackboard.

Step 2: Class discussion on a problem

Choose one of these problems and discuss it in class. Ask the students to:

- Determine the cause(s) of the problem, according to the experts;
- Identify its impact on the physical and social environment (e.g. vandalism, poverty, factory closing, etc.);
- Identify the values involved;
- Take a stand with regard to the problem;
- Think about whether it would help to consider the situation from different points of view;
- Imagine what the “ideal” situation would be if something were done about the factors causing the problem.

Primary activity

Now that the students have given it some thought, have them develop a project with regard to a problem in their community. In their own way, they can help fight poverty, loneliness, rejection, bullying, habitat degradation, etc. Some things, such as love, empathy and the good example one sets, multiply when shared.

Ask the students to fill out the Project Info Sheet in Appendix 5, providing as much detail as possible. Encourage them not to censor themselves; sometimes the best ideas can seem silly or unrealistic at first.

Here are some ideas for projects that can be done individually, in small groups or as a class:

- Make a daily phone call to someone who lives alone to say hello and see how they are doing.
- Bring in the mail for someone who has trouble walking.
- Collect unsold food at the market and help deliver meals in a poor neighbourhood.
- Work in a community garden.
- Plant trees in a specific area in the community.
- Write a letter to support a cause.
- Collect signatures on a petition.
- Create and put up posters to raise awareness of a problem or encourage a desired action.
- Attend the meeting of an organization.
- Put on a show to raise awareness of a certain problem or issue.

Enrichment activities

Enrichment activity 1: Publicize the projects

Organize an activity at school or in the community to present and promote the students' projects.

Enrichment activity 2: A "good news" newspaper

It's often said that newspapers and the media only cover bad news. Have the students create a newspaper that presents all the good news, good actions, etc. they observe in their community.

REFERENCES

Back, F. (1987). *The Man Who Planted Trees*. 30 min. English and French. CBC/Radio-Canada. Available in *Frédéric Back Classics* (4-DVD box set, 2007, 240 min).

The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg

Aesop Fable

A man and his wife owned a very special goose. Every day the goose would lay a golden egg, which made the couple very rich.

“Just think,” said the man’s wife, “If we could have all the golden eggs that are inside the goose, we could be richer much faster.”

“You’re right,” said her husband. “We wouldn’t have to wait for the goose to lay her egg every day.”

So the couple killed the goose and cut her open, only to find that she was just like every other goose. She had no golden eggs inside of her at all, and they had no more golden eggs.

Appendix 2
Happiness Survey

1. Date: _____

2. Your name: _____

3. Name of the person interviewed: _____

Read the following instructions to the person you are interviewing:

“Hi. I’m doing a survey on happiness and I’d like to ask you a few questions. It’s important to answer honestly. We’re going to discuss the results in class, but your name won’t be linked to your answers. Thank you for giving me your time for this interview.”

a) What makes you happy?

b) What do you think of the expression “Money can’t buy happiness”?

c) Complete this sentence: “In life, I’m grateful for...”

Now tell the person you are interviewing:

“Please tell me what you think about the following statements.”

d) My happiness depends on me.

e) My happiness depends on others.

f) My happiness depends on the environment.

g) I have a role to play in my own happiness.

h) I have a role to play in the happiness of others.

i) I have a role to play in the quality of the environment.

Thank you!

Appendix 3a

Character Study of an Exceptional Man

The story tells how a good, simple shepherd by the name of Elzéard Bouffier brings life back to a bleak and barren region by planting trees.

Not far from a ruined village, abandoned due to drought and raked by harsh winds, dwells a solitary shepherd. He is a man of few words, who lives in tune with the earth. Now in his 50s, having suffered serious hardships in his life, he has resolved to spend the rest of his days in patient, unsung labour. With his intimate knowledge of nature, he is determined to make a forest grow where there is nothing but a desolate wasteland. Carefully, one by one, he plants acorns and other seedlings. And life and youth gradually return as the land magically becomes green again.

In this world of ours, trying to find solutions often seems daunting because we don't see a way out of the problems. We think they can't be solved without significant resources. This story seemed to me to answer these concerns.

It's only through perseverance that we can eventually bring about the changes we want. The story is also about generosity. It's important to do what we know to be beneficial, even if it's ignored or dismissed. In time, it will bring undreamed-of joy. As Jean Giono said, "Everyone is desperately seeking happiness; but happiness can only be found through generosity."

We should thus sow, work, love, like Elzéard Bouffier, unsparingly and not expecting anything in return. The reward is in the doing.

Appendix 3b
Identify Elzéard Bouffier's Values

After reading the character study of Elzéard Bouffier (Appendix 3a) and watching the film *The Man Who Planted Trees*, what do you think are the values held by its hero? Write these values in the left-hand column and justify your answers in the right-hand column.

Value	Justification

Appendix 3c
Answer Key - Examples of Elzéard Bouffier's Values

Value	Justification
Generosity	He planted trees without seeking any reward or recognition. It was a totally selfless action. He welcomed the visitor simply, kindly sharing what he had with him.
Serenity	Being with this man brought a great sense of peace. He took pleasure in living slowly ... quiet, regular work ... peace of mind ... sure of himself ... I never saw him hesitate or doubt.
Meticulousness	House neat and tidy, roof repaired, clothes mended ... infinite care ... he examined the acorns very closely ... carefully chose and counted them. He had begun to study the growth of beech trees; he was also thinking of birches for the hollows, where there was moisture.
Perseverance	Constancy ... dedication ... tenacity... he had followed his dream ... quietly going about his business ... imperturbably ... regular work ... He must have had to overcome many obstacles ... fought and conquered despair.
Simplicity	Quiet, regular work, brisk mountain air, the simple life and, above all, peace of mind had endowed this old man with almost awe-inspiring health. ... In fact, he was more vigorous than ever.
Environmental awareness	He decided to transform the barren landscape by sowing life wherever he went, one tree at a time. He was aware of the preciousness of trees and how they contribute to the environment. He knew that they provide a habitat for animals, are part of the food chain and help conserve soil and water. Trees were also a source of inspiration for him.
Responsibility	Nobody asked him to plant trees; he just felt he should do it. He had a sense of responsibility for the environment and the living things around him.

Appendix 3d

List of Values

Simply defined, **values** are: **the principles that are held by a person or social group and that guide their behaviour.**

Example: If honesty is an important value for someone, that person will tend to appreciate it if others are truthful with him/her and will also tend to be honest with others.

Activism	Ingenuity
Altruism	Initiative
Ambition	Integrity
Compassion	Justice
Cooperation	Love
Courage	Meticulousness
Democracy	Modesty
Determination	Perseverance
Dignity	Politeness
Discretion	Reliability
Effectiveness	Respect
Empathy	Responsibility
Environment	Self-assurance
Equality	Serenity
Freedom	Simplicity
Friendship	Solidarity
Generosity	Tradition
Happiness	Trust
Honesty	Etc.
Independence	

The Boy Who Loved Starfish

A man walking on a beach at low tide spied a young boy who kept picking up stranded starfish and throwing them back into the sea. The man went up to him and asked:

“Why bother? There are so many of them all over this beach, and all over all the other beaches in the world. You can’t possibly make a difference.”

Picking up another starfish and throwing it into the water, the boy smiled and said, “It made a big difference to that one.”

Appendix 5
Project Info Sheet

1. Your name _____

2. Date _____

3. Project name

Find a name for your project. You can choose a name that reflects what you plan to do (e.g. "Fixing up the little green park and planting trees to give children a place to play in nature" or "Taking meals to a neighbour so he will feel less lonely and do better") or you can invent a simple, catchy name, such as "Trees are tops."

4. Objective of the project

Explain why you want to do this project (e.g. I want to clean up the park so that children can have a safe place to play).

5. Target person or place

Who do you want to help? What situation do you want to change or improve?

6. Method(s)

How do you plan to carry out your project?

7. Talents and skills required

What talents and skills do you need to carry out your project (e.g. tact, patience and perseverance to convince people to stop littering in the park)?

8. Materials required

9. Partners

Who could help with your project? (e.g. If you want to plant trees in your park to provide shade from the hot sun, you could ask your local nursery to donate some saplings or ask people in the community to give you shoots growing in their yards.)

10. Publicizing the project

How could you publicize your project? For example, if a family has lost everything in a fire, you could contact the local media and get them to ask people in the community to donate things to help out. Note that publicizing your project is not always a good idea (e.g. If you're helping a needy family, the family members would probably appreciate your discretion). You have to show sensitivity and use your judgment based on the situation.

11. Advance preparations

What steps must you take before starting your project? Do you need to obtain a permit, notify the authorities, request permission, ensure privacy, take safety precautions (e.g. wear gloves or a hard hat, rope off the area), etc.?

12. Duration of the project

How long will it take to carry out your project? You might need to spend a few minutes a day or a few hours a week on it, or your project could even span the whole year.
