

Food for thought



Lesson Plan

Lesson title	Food for thought
Learning objective	Children will begin to reflect on the significance of their food choices and the effect these may have on the natural world, as well as producers.
Pupils will:	Describe some key features associated with choices about food in different religions and belief systems, recognising similarities and differences and make links between beliefs about food and their sources. Identify what influences their own food choices and make links between these and those of other people including members of faith communities.
Key words	Food consumption, choice, Fairtrade, organic, chocolate.

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<p>Introduction</p> <p>Explain to the pupils that through this lesson they will consider some of the choices they make in relation to food in their day-to-day lives. They will be given opportunities to reflect upon these choices and those of others, including both religious and non-religious people. They will explore a range of issues, including their potential responsibility for themselves, for others and for the world around them.</p>	
<p>Activity 1</p> <p>Encourage the children to identify some of the factors determining food choices such as likes and dislikes, taking care to highlight the importance of a healthy and balanced diet (for example, the need to eat five portions of fruit and/or vegetables a day). Some children may also have particular dietary needs for specific health reasons, such as a food allergy relating to dairy products or gluten intolerance. It may also be appropriate to mention seasonal factors determining food choices, such as the prevalence of salads and picnic style food in the summer months, or warming dishes during the cold of the winter. In addition, remind children that the cost of certain items may determine what their families are able to provide for them. Finally, draw attention to the fact that some food choices are a result of religious or other moral beliefs, which may mean that</p>	<p>Resource 1: Information about and images of kosher and halal food</p> <p>Upanishad “Taittiriya” Chapter VII—The Importance of Food (I) <i>Let him never condemn food; that is the vow. The prana is, verily, food; the body is the eater of food. The body rests on the prana; the prana rest on the body. Thus food rests on food. He who knows this resting of food on food is established; he becomes a possessor of food and an eater of food.</i></p> <p>Note: Prana is the notion of a vital, life-sustaining force of living beings and vital energy.</p>

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<p>some people will only eat food which is halal, kosher, (Resource 1) vegetarian and vegan or which has been sold according to the principles of Fair Trade. Point out to the pupils that for Hindus food is extremely important. It is a vow not to condemn food. For example, in Upanishad “Taittiriya” there is this instruction embedded in the text (see Resources).</p> <p>Note: Upanishads are philosophical texts that are considered to be an early source of Hindu religion</p>	
<p>Activity 2</p> <p>Display a selection of everyday foods produced from seeds (such as bread, chocolate, cornflakes etc.) and talk about their origins, drawing the children’s attention to where they were produced and how (you may also use the images from Resource 2). Take one popular product from that display like a bar of chocolate and also find an example of its Fair Trade and an example of its organic equivalents. Ask the children to taste small pieces of the three types of chocolate without labels (one sample should be chocolate conventionally produced and distributed, the other a Fairtrade chocolate and the third organic chocolate). After the sampling, ask the pupils to say which one they would buy and why. Count the preferences for each type of chocolate and write them on the board. Create also a list of the different criteria they used to make their decision. Point out that our choices are not always guided by taste but also by other criteria such as availability and cost.</p> <p>Ask the pupils what the terms Fairtrade and organic mean (Resource 3) and then reveal how much each sample of chocolate usually costs.</p> <p>Discuss why any differences in cost might arise - pupils should understand that when items are fairly traded and/or organically produced, their cost is often higher. Ask the pupils whether they might alter the value they place on an object if it is fairly traded or organic.</p>	<p>Resource 2: Images of food products produced from seeds</p> <p>Resource 3: Meaning and images of Fairtrade and organic products</p>



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Activity 3

Show the pupils images of a farmers' market and a supermarket (**Resource 4**). Ask them what is the difference of the products being sold in the supermarket and the products being sold in a farmers' market. After the pupils express their opinion, point out that in the market farmers sell their products directly to the people and they can control the quality, distribution and cost of what they produce. On the contrary the products that are being sold in the supermarkets go through a lot of intermediaries before they end up on the shelves (e.g. transport companies, packaging companies etc.) and the farmers have very little control on setting the product price and get a relatively small percentage of that price. Also, compare the experience of going shopping in a supermarket with that of regularly going to a farmers' market. Ask the pupils: What might it be like to talk to the farmer who actually grows the produce? What would they find out if they talk to the farmers? Is it surprising to learn how fruit/vegetables, dairy products and meat are produced? What do they think of the working hours of farmers? Does this make them appreciate food more? Does it make them think twice about throwing food away?

Ask children to work in groups to find out how their chocolate bars are produced. Explain that they will follow the story of the plant that produces the cocoa beans to the supermarket that sells the chocolate. Point out that this activity will help them understand how a farmers from a developing country are often exploited and underpaid very little for their cocoa while the chocolate bar is highly priced in the supermarket.

Split the pupils into groups and give them images and short descriptions of the chocolate production chain (**Resource 5**). Ask them to place the images in what they believe is the right sequence, matching the images with the descriptions. At the end ask each group to present to the rest of the class, using the images and the descriptions, about how a chocolate bar ends up on the supermarket shelf.

Point out to the pupils that the price that the cocoa farmer gets is much lower than the price that the chocolate bar is sold. Talk to the children about the basic principles of Fair Trade and where possible, give them an opportunity to

Resources

Resource 4: Images of farmers' market and supermarket

Resource 5: The journey of cocoa from the cocoa plant into a chocolate bar on the supermarket selves

For stories of farmers visit:

www.oxfam.org.uk
www.tre.ngfl.gov.uk

Other websites with useful information and resources:

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/> <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>

The 'Coffee Chain Game' available at:

http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/Oxfam%20Coffee%20Chain%20Game.pdf

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investigate the stories of individual farmers and growers (see **Resources**). Explain that some people choose to buy Fair Trade products wherever possible because this is in accordance with their religious or moral beliefs and values. Highlight that it is important to know not just what they are eating but how it has been produced.

Now mention that coffee is another very popular product that we consume in our everyday life and explain that it is prepared from the roasted seeds of the coffee plant (usually *Coffea arabica* or *Coffea canephora*). The coffee plants are mainly cultivated in equatorial Latin America, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa and the production of coffee raises Fair-trade issues like chocolate and its production from cocoa. Tell pupils that they will explore the coffee supply chain, from bush to coffee cup through a role play in order to understand the position and the pressures that a coffee farmer has to face (see 'Coffee Chain Game' in **Resources**).

Introduce what different religions and secular belief systems have to say about treating others as you would like to be treated yourself. For example, in Christianity, the second of the Two Great Commandments is 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. The idea of Fairtrade is also embedded in Islam. In particular the Prophet Muhammed was known as Al Ameen – the Trustworthy – because of his fairness, honesty and high standards of dealing with others. He was a very successful trader and brought all these qualities to bear in his transactions. In conclusion, ask the children to decide which type of chocolate they would now choose to consume and why. Count the preferences for each type again and see if any changes in the preferences appear. Point out that there is no right or wrong decision or right or wrong answer. When people buy food it should be their decision what product to choose. It is important though to know that their choices may influence both the people who produce the food and the environment.

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Plenary

Show pupils 5 images (Resource 6) and ask them to identify how each type of food is produced (including references to the conditions in which people work, distribute and sell these types of food) and what criteria might people have when they choose to buy them. Ask them if they would choose to buy those products and why.

Pupils may be able to:

1. use religious words, such as halal and kosher and other specific terms, such as Fair Trade and organic to explain some of the different ways in which food is produced and how people may choose the food according to their beliefs and personal values and link what is important to themselves and others with the ways they think and behave.
2. demonstrate their understanding that people express their beliefs and values about food production in various ways and ask questions about the moral decisions they and others make, with reference to possible consequences and outcomes.
3. use specialist vocabulary to suggest reasons for the similarities and differences in what people believe about food choices and explain how various sources, including religious ones, are used to provide answers to questions about life and morality for both themselves and others.

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Resource 6: Images of different types of food