

Sustainable Festivities – Activity Ideas

Objectives

- To learn about consumer habits during festivals, for example Christmas, Eid or Diwali.
- Discuss and try out ways to celebrate that are more sustainable.

What to do

1. Play some Christmas or seasonal music. With this music in the background, ask pupils to sum up what Christmas, or a festival that is relevant to them, means to them in **one word**. It is likely that they will choose words like holiday, presents, food, lights, cards. Many of the words chosen are likely to imply increased consumption and waste.
2. Discuss habits that are not sustainable during the holidays (wrapping paper, Christmas trees, cards, energy use, gifts, food).
3. Ask pupils to think about alternatives to festival waste. Introduce some of the ideas listed here.

Ideas for Festive Alternatives

ADVENT

Make a Giving Calendar. Make squares on a wall or window. Ask the children to draw a special picture to go into one of the squares. Every day, choose one of the pictures and put it up. This way everyone gives to the calendar rather than receiving a gift from it

CARDS

Making cards - Suggest that pupils make their own Christmas cards either drawn themselves on **Reused paper**, **Reused cards**, and/or **Recycled paper**. Get them to put their hearts into a message in which they convey information about their ecological concerns and their hope that the person who receives it takes it to heart.

Buy cards from charities - Mention to pupils that if they absolutely must buy cards, they can buy them from organisations such as UNICEF, Oxfam, Survival International, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, etc. They could also send cards to other young people in the world, and to political prisoners recommended by Amnesty International.

Card-Go-Round – One for the staff room or the whole class – Make one big card that each person signs and then puts some money in a pot (however much they would have spent on individual cards plus a bit more for the cost of disposing of them after). You can choose whether to give the money to a charity or to think of something sustainable to spend it on!

GIFTS

Give experience gifts like – A trip to the cinema, or ice-skating trip.

Buy gifts in kind such as dedicating a tree through The woodland Trust's scheme, www.woodlandtrust.org buying gifts through Oxfam Unwrapped or similar schemes:



Oxfam have created Oxfam Unwrapped - a gift catalogue that enables you to choose and buy a gift that will help change lives overseas. Gifts include those for everyday life such as gardening tools and seeds, building materials, hens, a goat or tree seedlings. You can also choose gifts of items for health like hygiene kits, water buckets, mosquito nets or a radio. Schools will be especially interested in gifts for education and training. You can give a school desk and chair for £15, or teacher training for just £29. www.oxfamunwrapped.com

Give promise gift tokens to family members using the photocopyable sheet enclosed in this newsletter.

Research different ways to celebrate

Look at the ways people celebrate Christmas in other parts of the world on websites, for example www.christmas.com/worldview/ Discuss the reasons why some countries are under-represented on such a website.

Christmas Facts

- Christmas will create 3 million extra tons of rubbish, but we'll recycle just 12% of that.
- Over Christmas as much as 83 sq. km of wrapping paper will end up in UK bins, enough to cover an area larger than Guernsey.
- In 2001, 7.5 million Christmas trees were bought and only 1.2 million were recycled.
- Discarded Christmas trees create enough waste to fill the Albert Hall three times.
- The equivalent of 200,000 trees are used to produce the 1.7 billion cards sent each year in Britain.

(Source www.defra.gov.uk , 2004)

Promise Token Template

Sometimes a promise can be worth so much more than a material gift.
Use your imagination to think of promise gifts that someone special will really appreciate!

I promise to _____



With love from _____

.....✂.....

To fill in your promise token, think of something that the person you are giving it to would really love you to **do** for them. This could be, for example, cook them a special meal, take them on a countryside walk, tidy up the house, wash up once a week, babysitting, take them to the theatre or a music concert, read them a special story, paint them a picture, or anything you feel able to do that they would really appreciate.

I promise to _____



With love from _____

.....✂.....

To fill in your promise token, think of something that the person you are giving it to would really love you to **do** for them. This could be, for example, cook them a special meal, take them on a countryside walk, tidy up the house, wash up once a week, babysitting, take them to the theatre or a music concert, read them a special story, paint them a picture, or anything you feel able to do that they would really appreciate.