

...the pancakes were naught and the mustard was good,...

William Shakespeare, *As you like it* (Act 1, Sc. 2)

The magic world of plants. Stories about plants. Reality and imagination

Premise

This card envisages a large public of learners encompassing primary, pre-primary and Middle School as it can either be dealt with either very simple oral narratives or be based on images only, or images accompanied by short sentences/captions; expanded by way of written stories based on scientific truths, or stories of the imagination describing fantastic worlds of plants and creatures

Learners

Pupils of the pre-primary, primary and Middle School

Subjects

English, Sciences, ICT, Italian (where advisable)

Objectives

Small pupils (pre-primary, primary)

- becoming aware of the importance of the plants in the life system of all living creatures
- developing a respectful attitude to plants
- observing, perceiving, learning and speaking of some important facts about plants
- describing through images the real or imaginary story of a plant, flower, etc. (Primary: accompanied by short paragraphs or sentences)
- using English to different degrees

Middle school learners

- to different degrees, learn the scientific data, concepts, accounts about the role and importance of the plants for the life of all living creatures

- be aware of the main characteristics and functions of the plants as regards biodiversity and sustainability with reference to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- use scientific material and specifics to narrate plausible stories concerning plants
- be creative and use imagination to narrate fantastic stories about plants
- enhance both scientific thinking and creativity
- employ English as language of communication in all its forms
- favour subject interaction

Competences

Small pupils (pre-primary, primary)

- enhance observation
- stimulate perception and sensation
- learn some basic data about plants
- use creativity to imagine and narrate by means of drawings, words and sentences
- use English to speak or write about plants

Middle school students

- research and learn scientific data, information and categorize them
- learn about sustainability, biodiversity and enhance ethical behaviour
- use English to communicate, describe and narrate
- share and exchange information and opinions
- develop and reinforce both scientific thinking and creativity
- be aware of the different mental processes when dealing with different cultural/ educational approaches

Tools and materials

School materials, technological devices

Duration

About one/two months

Development

Brainstorming session among teachers to establish tasks, activities, time schedule, etc.

Small pupils (pre-primary, primary)

Warm-up. Elicit information from the pupils about plants and related details using pictures, videos, drawings, etc...(the web provides lots of appropriate material)

Age-appropriate explanation about the features of the project, the activities that will be developed, the goal/s to be reached, the tools and materials to be used

Science: Lessons on plants and on their vital importance to our planet and human life with different degrees of complexity according to the level of the pupils. Use of printed and online texts and images

Oral sum-up of the main concepts learnt

Visit to the Botanical Garden to observe some plants and flowers, their colours, shapes, height, location/distribution, etc., for example those forming the Shakespearean pathways

Learning their names in English according to pupils' age

Sensorial activities based on smelling, touching, looking at some peculiarities, etc.

Teachers: shooting a video of some plants (including fruit plants), flowers, herbs

Class work prompted by the teachers with the help of images and video: speaking about the plants seen. Ask questions about their names, colours, dimensions, perfumes, leaves, etc. even through a questionnaire (e.g. True/False) for the pupils of the last three years of the primary

The teachers show again the video (or some pictures) of the flowers, plants, etc. and then read or narrate a tale/fairy tale where the species are present. The name of the species is said in Italian and English

Afterwards, the teachers ask some questions about the tale and more specifically about the plant/s mentioned. The pupils should remember both the Italian and English names

They invite the pupils to draw one or more of the plant/s spoken about, visible in the video or in the images

Pre-primary pupils: they draw their own image of the plant/s (maybe some details of the story) of which they should know the name and be able to say it in English and Italian

Primary, first and second grade: they listen to the tale/fairy tale and reproduce it, or invent another one, in their drawings writing underneath some very short sentences including the name/s of the plant/s

Primary, last grades: during the science classes they get some scientific notions about some of the plants selected from the video and researched online. On these bases, and considering their different levels, they can narrate a (very) short true story about the plant/s or imagine a



fantastic one, both accompanied by drawings

On completion of the three situations described, the drawings, the stories with names, etc. are glued on folded-out cards similar to an accordion (a leporello) and hung around the classroom or another place in the school

A video of the exhibition will be shot and uploaded on the school website

(the Italian song *Ci vuole un fiore* can be sung, read, discussed and..... translated)

Products

Leporellos with drawings, paintings, captions, stories, etc.

Video: *The Magic World of Plants*

Evaluation and validation

See introduction

Middle school students

Warm-up. Elicit information from the pupils about plants and related details using pictures, videos, drawings, etc.. (the web provides lots of appropriate material)

Explanation about the features of the project, the activities that will be developed, the goal/ls to be reached, the tools and materials to be used

Reading of the part/s concerning environment, climate, sustainability, etc. from the UN SDGs agenda 2030 and oral comment and debate on the related points, prompted by specific questions

Written account to point out the issues connected to such environmental points on the basis of a list of questions prepared by the teacher/s

Visit to the Botanical Garden. Here particular attention is given to the Shakespearean sectors where the plants are closely observed and their names learnt (in English and Italian)

Video shooting, drawing or photographing of the various species since they will serve as example-topics for study

In-depth study of the plants, flowers, etc. considered by means of botanical texts and videos; description on tables and use of graphs to point out specific elements

Reflection on: what do plants do for all the living creatures of this planet? What do we mean by habitat, deforestation, depletion, etc.? Will life exist without plants?

Brief written account to answer the above questions (individual students or groups)

Research of narrative texts useful for inspiration such as *The Man in the Tree*, *The Overstory*, *The Man who planted Trees*, *Two Trees make a Forest* and reading of some extracts or full text.



Selection of meaningful words and sentences from the stories and transcription on individual booklets with addition of personal comments and drawings or cuttings of images

Considerations on Henry David Thoreau's statement "“Old trees are our parents, and our parents' parents, perchance.” **Class debate with interpretations and explanations**

Writing a brief, real or imaginary, tale about plants accompanied by drawings and/or pictures

Presentation of each story before the class with some proposals about how to save plants, planet and life

Collection of the whole documentation to create a book or a fanzine subdivided into a scientific and a narrative part, and an e-book with videos to be uploaded on the school website completed with an accurate bibliography and a presentation from the teachers of each subject concerned with an account of the motivations and of the methodological pathways exploited

Products

Book or Fanzine *The magic World of Plants*

E-book *No Trees, no Life*

Evaluation and validation

See introduction