

Lesson plan **Me and nature** **Nature all around us**

1. **Theme:** Me and nature: Nature all around us
2. **Grade:** 6th
3. **Lesson type:** combined
4. **Duration:** 45 min.
5. **Basic terms:** nature, environment, ecology, ecosystem, balance, pollution, deforestation, overfishing, overconsumption, conservation, climate change
6. **Pedagogical methods:** storytelling, presentation, discussion, dialog, reflection, group work, brainstorming
7. **Means:** board (interactive or otherwise), markers, laptop/computer, multimedia (screen/projector), ppt presentation, flipchart (optional), poster sheets, makers, drawing tools, optional – stickers or images of some kind (newspaper, flyers, brochure), scissors, and glue

8. Goals:

○ Educational:

The students

- ✓ Define key concepts such as ecosystem, ecology, pollution, conservation
- ✓ Explain how ecosystems function and why balance is important
- ✓ Identify examples of ecological challenges in their local environment and suggest simple solutions
- ✓ Compare different types of pollution (air, water, soil) and their impact on ecosystems
- ✓ Judge the effectiveness of conservation strategies (e.g., recycling, tree planting, reducing waste)
- ✓ Design a group project that supports nature conservation
- ✓ Summarize and compare the attitudes of at least two world religions toward nature and conservation

○ Formational:

The students

- ✓ Show willingness to listen and learn about ecological problems
- ✓ Actively participate in discussions on ecosystems and conservation
- ✓ Express respect for the importance of nature by proposing solutions to common ecological challenges

- ✓ Integrate ecological values into their own worldview, recognizing the importance of sustainable behaviour
- ✓ Demonstrate consistent environmentally friendly habits
- ✓ Respect and appreciate how different religions highlight caring for nature, showing openness to diverse perspectives

9. Cross-curricular connections: Biology, Religious studies, Chemistry

10. Intra-subject connections: with the lesson plans on the themes: I support others, Me and my environment, Me and health, and the other modules from the Me and nature theme

11. Expected results:

- ✓ The students use key ecological terms (ecosystem, ecology, pollution, conservation) naturally when explaining ideas in discussion or writing
- ✓ The students describe in their own words how human actions can disturb or maintain the balance of nature
- ✓ The students identify specific signs of pollution or other environmental problems in their surroundings
- ✓ The students suggest small-scale actions that a class or family could do to support conservation
- ✓ Compare the impact of different conservation strategies and express which they find most convincing
- ✓ The students develop positive attitudes toward nature, showing growing awareness of their own responsibility
- ✓ The students acknowledge and respect the way various religions encourage care for the natural world

12. Preparation

○ For the teacher: Reading the theoretical base, downloading the presentation, providing poster sheets, drawing tools, and, optionally, stickers or images of some kind (newspaper, flyers, brochure), scissors, and glue

13. Structure of the lesson:

Me and nature: Nature all around us

1. Nature is everywhere
 - What is nature?
 - How do we fit in?
 - Why is nature important?
2. Ecological challenges in today's world

- What are the current challenges
- What are the attitudes of different religions towards nature
- How different religions help in nature conservation
- How can we help
- 3. Activity – “Save the nature” campaign
- 4. Reflection and discussion
- The students are prompted to answer several questions on the subject, reflecting on their thoughts and feelings and engaging in a discussion.

14. Structure, content and timeline

1. Introduction (4 min.)

- Teacher activity:

- Actualization of prior knowledge on the subject: What do you think are some of the reasons for environment pollution?; What do you think are the best ways to save water from pollution? And what about air?; How can we ensure that we produce less waste? (2 min.)

- Introduction of new information and terms: (2 min.)

Nature is everything around us that is not man-made: trees, animals, rivers, mountains, oceans, soil, and the air we breathe. It includes both living things (plants, animals, humans) and non-living things (water, rocks, sunlight). An important part on nature are ecosystems. An ecosystem is a biological community of organisms, interacting with each other and with their environment. It is like nature's neighbourhood where all the living organisms and non-living things work together in the same area. Just like people in a community depend on each other, everything in an ecosystem is connected – plants make food from sunlight through photosynthesis, animals eat the plants or other animals, and when things die, they break down to help new plants grow. Ecosystems can be as big as a forest or as small as a pond, and when one part changes, it affects everything else, which is why these natural communities are so important to protect.

We humans are part of nature, and we depend on it for food, water, shelter, and oxygen. Our bodies and lives are connected to the natural world, and our actions influence the balance of ecosystems around us. Nature provides us with life, and it gives us resources. But nature is not endless, nor are its resources – if we take too much or harm it, the balance can be broken. Ecology, the science of how living things interact with each other and their environment, teaches us that every small part of nature has its role. That is the reason for the importance of conservation; of protecting nature so that this balance stays healthy for future generations.

- Student activity:

- Participation in the dialog, asking questions, active listening

- Methods and tools:

- Methods: dialog, storytelling
 - Tools: board, marker or an interactive whiteboard (for outlining the theme and the terms; optional, for writing down student's ideas, thoughts)
2. Stating the theme of the lesson: Me and nature: Nature all around us (38 min.)
- Teacher activity:
 - Short presentation, focused on nature, ecosystems, ecology and the current ecological challenges, and ways in which different religions appreciate nature (10 min.)
 - Theoretical overview, performed with the presentation:

Today's world faces serious ecological challenges that affect ecosystems everywhere. Forests are being cut down too quickly, which harms animals and causes climate change. Pollution from cars, factories, and plastic waste damages the air, water, and soil. Many animals are becoming endangered or even extinct. Overfishing happens when people catch fish faster than the fish can reproduce and replace themselves, which can harm ocean ecosystems and eventually lead to fewer fish for everyone. Habitat destruction and overexploitation of resources are driving species extinction at an alarming rate, disrupting ecological balance and food security, and 66 percent of ocean areas are impacted by human activities, including from fisheries and pollution. Climate change, caused by too many greenhouse gases, continues to cause rising temperatures, ice caps melting, and extreme weather events. These problems are interconnected – when one part of an ecosystem is damaged by pollution, deforestation, overfishing, or habitat loss, it affects all the plants and animals that depend on that environment, making it harder for nature to stay balanced and healthy.

The connection between humans and nature is emphasised in many religious teachings, highlighting its importance. Different religions have varied attitudes towards nature, often shaped by their core beliefs and scriptures. These perspectives fundamentally influence how believers understand humanity's relationship with the natural world and their responsibilities toward environmental stewardship. Some religious traditions (e.g. some parts of Christianity) emphasize dominion, interpreting sacred texts to suggest humans have been granted authority over nature and the right to use its resources. The major religions, however, including Christianity, outline stewardship, viewing humans as caretakers responsible for protecting and preserving creation. Many faiths incorporate the concept of interconnectedness, teaching that all living beings are part of a sacred web of existence where harming nature ultimately harms humanity itself.

Christianity views nature as God's creation, positioning humans in a stewardship role where they are called to care for and protect the environment. Biblical teachings emphasize managing the earth responsibly without exploitation, with humans serving as guardians rather than owners of creation. Christian environmentalists have increasingly advocated for protecting ecosystems, addressing climate change, and opposing harmful environmental practices, viewing this stewardship as a fundamental spiritual duty that reflects their faith commitment.

Islam similarly emphasizes profound respect for all creatures as manifestations of God's wisdom and beauty. In Islamic theology, humans are appointed as custodians (khalifah) who are entrusted with the sacred duty to preserve wildlife, forests, and water resources. Nature is understood as a sign of God's existence that inspires spirituality while simultaneously creating

the responsibility to avoid environmental harm. This perspective frames environmental protection as both a religious obligation and a pathway to spiritual understanding.

Judaism holds a more complex view where humans possess privileged moral claims over nature while also bearing significant responsibilities toward it. While protecting nature is considered important, it remains secondary to human welfare and following God's commandments. Nature is to be respected but not revered above human needs, emphasizing responsible use and enjoyment of the natural world rather than preservation at all costs.

Hinduism presents a markedly different perspective, seeing nature as a direct manifestation of the divine and part of an interconnected eternal being that encompasses God, the world, and the individual soul. Nature is actively deified and worshipped through elaborate rituals, prayers, and celebrations that acknowledge the inherent sacredness of natural elements including earth, fire, water, and wind. This tradition encourages devotees to honour and protect nature as a concrete expression of the divine presence in the material world.

Buddhism advocates for a gentle, non-aggressive attitude toward nature, conceptualizing it as a partner for achieving peaceful coexistence rather than a resource to be managed. The Buddha's own life and teachings emphasized meditation in natural settings, demonstrating symbolic respect for trees and forests as spiritual sanctuaries. Buddhist ethical principles explicitly include avoiding pollution and maintaining environmental cleanliness for the benefit of all living beings, reflecting the interconnected nature of existence.

Shinto, the indigenous spiritual tradition of Japan, embodies a profound animistic worldview where natural phenomena are inhabited by kami (spirits or divine essences). Mountains, rivers, trees, and rocks are not merely physical objects but sacred dwelling places of spiritual beings deserving reverence and protection. This perspective creates an intimate relationship between humans and their immediate natural environment, where environmental harmony is essential for spiritual well-being and community prosperity.

Taoism, which originated in China, emphasizes living in accordance with the Tao (the Way; ultimate guiding force in the universe), which represents the natural order and flow of the universe. This philosophical tradition teaches that humans should align themselves with natural patterns and rhythms rather than attempting to dominate or control nature. The Taoist principle of wu wei (non-action or effortless action) encourages minimal interference with natural processes, promoting environmental harmony through understanding and cooperation rather than manipulation or exploitation.

Because of these teachings, many religious groups take action to protect the environment. Churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues may organize tree-planting projects, campaigns to reduce waste, or awareness events about climate change. For example, in India, Hindu communities have worked to clean up the River Ganges. In many Christian countries, churches have led recycling and energy-saving projects. These efforts show that faith and ecology can work together to preserve balance in nature.

Everybody can make a difference and have an important role in caring for nature – even with small, everyday actions. Among the most important ones are: reducing waste by recycling paper, glass, and plastic; reusing what we can, so we don't overconsume; saving energy by switching off lights when not needed; not littering; planting trees and flowers to support wildlife; using water wisely and avoiding waste; treating animals and plants with care; learning more about animals and ecosystems, and sharing that knowledge with others.

3. Activity: "Save the nature" campaign (28 min.)

- ✓ The teacher initiates a brainstorming session about the main challenges in environmental conservation in the concrete local area (air, soil, or water pollution, overconsumption, waste, etc.); the ideas are written on the board
 - ✓ The teacher then divides the class into small groups (3-4 students) and each group selects (or is assigned) one of the problems of work on
 - ✓ Each group creates a campaign about the selected issue: first they explain the challenges in a concise way (too many cars create air pollution, there is a lot of waste that contributes to it, many construction sites add to the problem); then they summarise practical steps to improve the situation (convincing people to use other means of transportation, creating regulations about waste and constructions sites, and more); and design their own slogan and suite of communication tools to tell the world about the problems in a persuasive way (written/drawn on a poster, but can be about social media, other types of media, podcasts, interviews, documentary, some kind of creative artistic performance, or anything else – including a combination of a few).
 - ✓ When each group has designed their poster with suggested ways to construct the campaign, they present it to the class
 - ✓ Each group comments on the campaigns of the other groups, providing constructive peer reviews (criteria: are the challenges well explained; are the solutions presented in a detailed way; are the selected communication tools adequate and would they be successful for the campaign)
- Student activity:
 - Participation in the dialog, taking notice of the presentation, asking questions, active listening, participation in the activity and in the follow-up discussion
 - Methods and tools:
 - Methods: dialog, presentation, storytelling, group work, discussion, brainstorming
 - Tools: interactive board or a screen, laptop/computer, board, marker, flipchart (optional, for writing down students' ideas), poster sheets, makers, drawing tools, optional – stickers or images of some kind (newspaper, flyers, brochure), scissors, and glue
4. Reflection and discussion (3 min.)
- Teacher activity:
 - ✓ The teacher summarises the main challenges and their possible solutions, complementing each group's efforts on their campaigns
 - Posing questions for a discussion:
 - ✓ Which of these challenges do you think are the most dangerous ones for the nature?

- ✓ How does your daily life contribute to either protecting or harming nature, and what small changes could you realistically make to reduce your environmental footprint?
- ✓ How do you feel when we discuss the dangers for the nature?
- ✓ How would you encourage your family and friends to protect the nature?
- Engaging the students with prompts:
 - ✓ “I think overconsumption is dangerous as it leads to several types of pollution”
 - ✓ “I could reduce my overall consumption of goods and use less plastic”
 - ✓ “I feel sad, but also motivated to change things”
 - ✓ “I would talk with them and be an example”
- Answering questions and clarifying information
- Student activity:
 - Engaging in the discussion
 - Reflection on their ideas and emotions on the subject
- Methods:
 - Methods: reflection, discussion, active listening

15. Variations:

- The “Reuse and recycle” activity: The teacher gives the students (or has previously asked to bring) clean recyclables (plastic bottles, cardboard, cans); then the teacher guides the students to create simple eco-friendly crafts (e.g., pencil holders, bird feeders, planters); a discussion is conducted about how recycling helps reduce pollution.
- The “Biodiversity” awareness initiative: The teacher tasks students to develop posters, videos, or social media posts (written/drawn on paper) about biodiversity; the students should focus on local issues like reducing pesticides or planting native species; the class proposes ways to share the ideas with the school or community.
- The Debate activity: The teacher assigns students roles as policymakers, environmentalists, business leaders, or citizens; then the teacher hosts a debate about balancing personal and community needs with climate action (e.g. we need bags to put our groceries in; we can have reusable ones).
- The “Tree-planting initiative”: The teacher provides (or asks students to find) seeds for tree-planting and the class plants them in the school yard.
- The “Eco Detective” activity: The teacher reads a fictional (or real) story to the students; they have to identify “bad” habits in the story (e.g. littering or overconsumption) and suggest solutions.
- The “Students as scientists” activity: The teacher introduces the students to the following website: <https://www.inaturalist.org/> (in English) where students can record their observation of nature; the students engage in observation and data recording,

- thus becoming part of the civil science community; the students can review other people's contribution and discuss different species, plants, etc.
- The "Map review" activity: The teacher present the following website, containing an interactive map showing areas threatened by sea level rise and coastal flooding – <https://coastal.climatecentral.org/> (in English); the class chooses a map for a review; the teachers initiates a discussion about climate change issues and possible solutions.
 - Other ideas for activities are available at <https://greenerinsights.com/20-school-project-ideas-to-teach-about-climate-change/> and <https://greenerinsights.com/20-school-nature-projects-for-students/>.

16. Interesting facts (from Thomson, J., 2025: <https://www.livescience.com/planet-earth/plants/plants-facts-about-our-oxygen-providers>; <https://greenwoodhigh.edu.in/15-incredible-fun-facts-about-animals/>; <https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/the-truth-about-plants-seven-fun-fascinating-and-frightening-facts/>; <https://www.longacres.co.uk/blog/20-fun-facts-about-plants/>; <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-siblings.html>; <https://www.nasa.gov/ames/space-biosciences/plant-gravity-perception-spacex-13/>; <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment-programme/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection>; and <https://greenerinsights.com/45-incredible-nature-facts-to-know/>)

- ✓ Octopuses have three hearts.
- ✓ Dolphins have names for each other; they are highly intelligent and social beings and have a unique form of communication through whistles.
- ✓ Sea otters hold hands while sleeping.
- ✓ Kangaroos cannot walk backwards.
- ✓ Cows have best friends; they are very sociable and form bonds with humans as well.
- ✓ Giraffes only need 30 minutes to sleep. They sleep while standing, but occasionally they lie down and curl back their necks by resting their heads.
- ✓ Penguins propose a potential mate by searching for a perfect pebble to offer in a sweet courtship ritual.
- ✓ Squirrels play a vital role, yet accidental, in forest regeneration – they plant thousands of trees each ear. This happens when they forget some of their buried nuts and seeds, which then sprout into new trees.
- ✓ The heart of a blue whale is the size of a car.
- ✓ Plants can communicate with each other by releasing chemicals when they are under attack.
- ✓ Despite not having brains, some plant species can "remember" things from the past and react accordingly.
- ✓ Around 30,000 plant species are used in medicine.
- ✓ Around 2,000 new plant species are discovered every year.
- ✓ 90 percent of the foods humans eat come from just 30 plants.
- ✓ Plants can recognize their siblings.
- ✓ Plants can detect gravity; they need to send their roots downwards towards water and nutrients and their shoots upwards towards light.
- ✓ Bamboo is the world's fastest growing plant.

- ✓ There are lakes under the ocean. Certain areas on the ocean floor have highly saline “pools” of water that don’t mix with the surrounding seawater, creating lake-like formations complete with shorelines and sometimes even “waves”.
- ✓ Over 80% of the ocean remains unexplored, and scientists believe there are thousands of species still unknown.
- ✓ Mount Everest is still growing.
- ✓ Snow can be pink. Algae in some snow produce a pink or red hue known as “watermelon snow”. This algae also smells faintly of watermelon.
- ✓ The Northern Lights are caused by solar wind – when charged particles from the sun interact with Earth’s magnetic field.
- ✓ Baha’i Faith writings state the importance of the harmony between human life and the natural world. They underline a deep respect for nature and the interconnectedness of all things, seeing especially in nature a reflection of the divine and an illustration of the oneness of humanity.
- ✓ Originated from India, the main teaching from Jainism religion is Ahimsa, the non-violence, in all parts of life. Verbally, physically and mentally, Jainism doctrines focus on a peaceful and disciplined life. Kindness to animals, vegetarianism and self-restraint with the avoidance of waste are parts of Jains life.