

Fair Trade – Lesson Plan KS3 English

Persuading and Debating

Ask the pupils if they know what fair trade is.

Briefly introduce it. Ask if it sounds like a good thing.

Do any of the pupils' parents buy fair trade as a matter of course anyway? Bananas, cocoa, honey, wine, pasta and rice and many other products are all available.

If the pupils' parents don't, why do they think this is? Perhaps they don't know about it/think it is too expensive/have never considered it/prefer the taste of something else.

Talk about the skill of persuading. Sometimes, especially with family, we can be very direct and just tell them what to do, 'Mum, you should buy fair trade'. Talk about the pros and cons of this as a persuading mechanism. What other ways are there to approach the issue? 'Mum, do you know much about fair trade?'; 'Mum, we've been learning about fair trade at school...'; 'Have you ever had fair trade tea/coffee/chocolate – it's really nice!'. Talk about the different tones of voice you might use for each of these (or other examples). Let the pupils experiment in pairs with different ways of introducing the subject using different attitudes and intonations: angrily, resentfully, hurriedly, irritably, demandingly, boringly, enthusiastically etc.

Ask the pupils to broach the subject with their parents or carers before the next lesson.

Ask them to make a note of how they asked and what the response was, including any questions their parents asked and whether they could answer them. Ask them to use the method that they think will be the most effective.

In the next lesson follow up on this. Hear from members of the class what they said and what their parents' or carers' response was. Discuss possible responses to the objections raised.

Suggestions for follow-up work

1. Give the class an article arguing for fair trade (see next page). Ask them to summarise the main points and then to say how persuasive they found it and why.

2. 'Life's just not fair – there's nothing you can do about it, just accept it'

Use this as the starting point for a piece of written work. What do the pupils think of this attitude? What might they say in response to it?

3. 'We should encourage others to buy fair trade'. Organise a class debate on this issue.



This article is intended to be polemical in style and is written for use in lessons, with the intention of inspiring debate and encouraging critical engagement.

Fair Trade

The fair trade movement is gaining pace. Fifty two percent of British adults are now said to recognise the Fairtrade Mark, and the number of products qualifying for the Mark has recently risen from under 200 to over 2500 in little over two years. So what is all the fuss about? Is it just a current craze, born out of the groundswell of Make Poverty History, or is this a growing trend and a sign of things to come?

There are a number of key principles underlying fair trade. One is the inherent value and equality of every human being on the planet. No one is any less important than anyone else, thus it is unfair that some live in material luxury whilst others struggle to scrape together enough to eat each day.

Ultimately, fair trade is not just another consumer choice but an attempt to fight poverty. Traidcraft, the UK's leading fair trade company, was established not simply as another plc aiming to attract customers through fair trade, the latest gimmick for a niche market, but as 'a Christian response to poverty'. Every human is created in the image of God, and is therefore inherently valuable. They deserve the dignity of being able to work for themselves, feed their families and improve their lives. No human being deserves to have to live out their days in extreme poverty, without their basic requirements met, and with no scope for creativity or initiative to improve their lives. For those of us born into the privileged position of having a roof over our heads and enough to eat each day (a luxury afforded to only a small proportion of the global population), agreeing with this principle of equality provides us with an imperative to care about the plight of our 'global neighbour'.

For so many of us, the poverty we see on our TV screens is overwhelming. We would like to do something, but where on earth do we start? The need is so great, and our resources and power so limited. It's all too easy to end up doing nothing.

That's the beauty of fair trade! We all go shopping. We all buy things like chocolate, fruit juice, bananas wine, coffee, honey or pasta. Our buying habits are driven by a range of concerns: convenience, cost, appearance and taste, to name but a few. Fair trade provides us with a further choice. It actively provides us with the option of reducing poverty as we shop. Those from the developing world who are able to trade on fair trade terms are being given an opportunity for justice. Yes, it cuts across some of the usual economic or business principles by which we habitually function; it challenges our relentless search for the cheapest deal and the lowest price. However, it also empowers us. We don't have to sit on the sidelines, impotent in the face of poverty and suffering. Fair trade is powerful because it is a global movement with far-reaching consequences, yet it has a human face. It is not difficult, through websites and resources from fair trade companies, to see photos and hear stories of actual people in the developing world who have had their lives transformed through fair trade.

Let's return to the concept of empowerment. It's a strong principle, which applies in more ways than one to the fair trade movement. Not only does fair trade empower consumers, its impact on producers in the developing world is equally empowering. Designed not simply to provide handouts to the poor, but to give opportunities for them to work their own way out of poverty through hard work and initiative, fair trade does not oppress or create dependency, but rather frees producers to exercise creativity.

Our actions have an impact on those across the world. In so many instances we have little say as to whether this impact is positive or negative. Fair trade provides us with a choice in this. It has a guaranteed, tangible, positive impact on the producer groups and individuals who benefit from it.