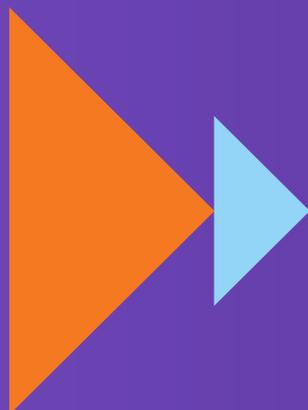
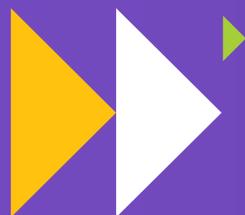


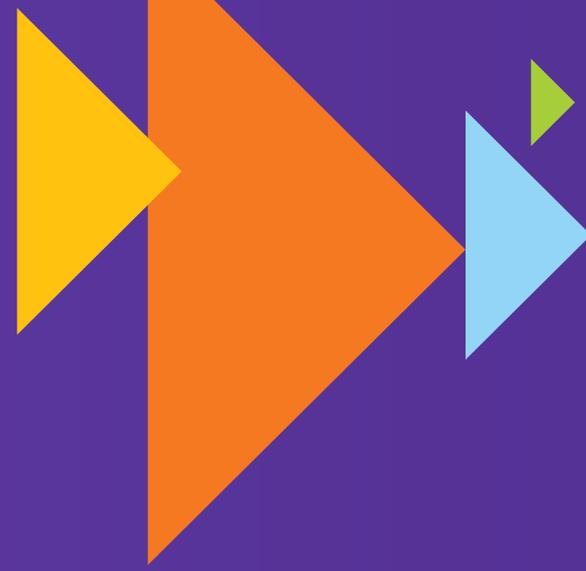


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# Developing language acquisition through topic-based learning

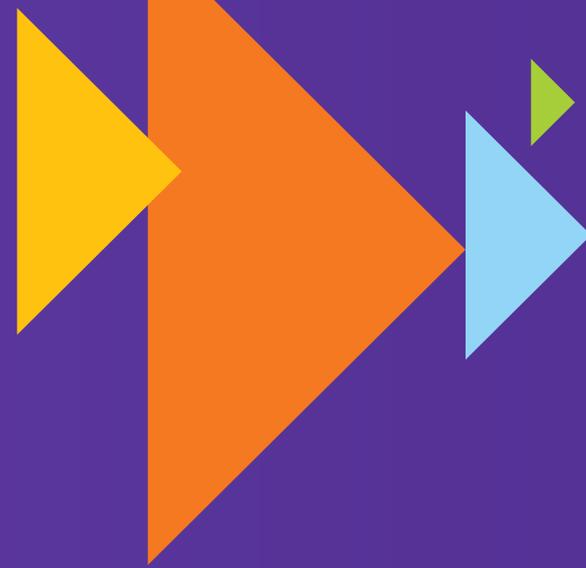
Claire Medwell





# ▶▶ This session will cover:

- ▶ What is topic-based learning?
- ▶ A historical perspective
- ▶ What are the benefits of topic-based learning in the primary and lower secondary classroom?
- ▶ Considerations when implementing topic-based learning in the English language teaching/English as a second language classroom
- ▶ How to set up a topic-based lesson in your classroom



## What is topic-based learning?

This approach stems from teaching **English** through a range of curriculum subjects such as **Science, Maths, Music, Art, Social studies, Technology, Literature, Psychology** etc.

**Topics** could include: inventions, the human body, sport and health, shapes, problem-solving, caring for the environment and mental well-being.

# What topics are being taught here through the medium of English?

8 My amazing body

**The nose knows**  
Think about the smell of the beach or your grandmother's house.  
Every place has a special smell.  
Do you think you would know from just smell if you were in a bakery, a bookshop or a bike shop?




**Smell detective**

Dogs have a marvellous sense of smell. They can use their noses to find:

- people
- food
- money
- diseases, like cancer and COVID-19.



Smells can warn us of **danger**. Have you ever smelled these things? What did you do?

Cambridge Global English Learner's Book Stage 3



- Fruit and vegetables
- Grains, cereals and potatoes
- Dairy products
- Meat, fish, nuts and eggs
- Fats and sugars

Cambridge Global English Learner's Book Stage 4

1 **Talk about robots.**  
We often use robots for things that are difficult for us to do or things that we don't want to do. Look at the pictures below and guess what these robots do.

2 **What can these robots do?**  
Listen and match the titles to the paragraphs.

Robots can help with delicate operations      Robots can go where we can't survive

Robots can go where it's dangerous for us      Robots can do jobs that people find boring

1 Some robots go to places where it is hard or impossible for people to go. They take photos, measure things or collect **samples** for scientists to study. Robots with wheels have **explored** the moon and the planet Mars. Some robots go deep into the ocean to explore plants and animals that live there. They also **search** for old ships on the ocean floor.



2 Other robots can go into dangerous places where there have been fires, earthquakes or explosions. Robots can search for people to **rescue**. They can find people and send us information. They can move walls or things that fall.



Blue Dragon robot moving over a pile of debris.

3 Some robots do jobs that are repetitive. They make cars and other things in **factories**. They are often faster and stronger than people especially when they make big or heavy things.



46 >

Cambridge Global English Learner's Book Stage 3

4 **Values: Taking care of Planet Earth**  
The people who live on our street are our neighbours. People who live in other countries are also our neighbours. We all need to work together to take care of Planet Earth. Listen and join in the song.



**We've got the whole world in our hands**  
**Chorus** We've got the whole world in our hands. (sing 4 times)

We've got our brothers and our sisters in our hands,  
We've got our friends and our family in our hands,  
We've got people everywhere in our hands,  
We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the sun and the rain in our hands,  
We've got the moon and the stars in our hands,  
We've got the wind and the clouds in our hands,  
We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the rivers and the mountains in our hands,  
We've got the seas and the oceans in our hands,  
We've got the towns and the cities in our hands,  
We've got the whole world in our hands.



Watch this!

43 >

Cambridge Global English Learner's Book Stage 2

# Engaging Age-appropriate TOPICS Motivating

## > 3.2 Street art and optical illusions

### We are going to...

- learn about street art.



1 **Talk:** What's special about this photo? In pairs, talk about what you can see.

14 2 **Read and listen** to the text. How does an optical illusion work?

Do you ever see street artists in your town? There are lots of famous artists who draw optical illusion drawings on the street for everyone to enjoy.

This photo is an optical illusion painting on the street. What can you see? A big hole in the middle of a street? A melting glacier? You think there is a big hole, but there isn't!

Optical illusions are very clever because they work with light, patterns and colours to create an image to trick your brain. You see things which aren't really there! When you look at the photo, your eyes and brain work together. It takes less than a second for the brain to work out the information your eyes can see. You can then understand and describe what you are looking at.

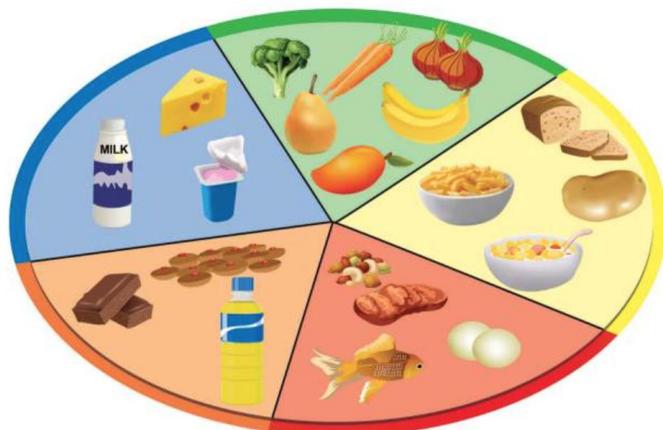


Cross-curricular links	21st-century skills
Citizenship	<b>Values:</b> Be the best form of ourselves  <b>Critical thinking:</b> Thinking and talking about personal qualities
Health science: health food and malaria	Healthy eating – why is it important? <b>Values:</b> Helping each other  <b>Critical thinking:</b> Recognising symptoms
Art and design: Street art and optical illusions	What makes an ideal place to live? <b>Values:</b> Looking after our environment  <b>Critical thinking:</b> Compare and share opinions of urban/rural life
Maths: Time zones, Problem solving	Interpreting time zones Comparing cultures <b>Values:</b> Valuing others
Science: The human brain	Assessing risk <b>Values:</b> Being inclusive  <b>Critical thinking:</b> Interpreting numbers



**1 Vocabulary:** Do you eat a healthy diet? What do you know about food?  
Look at the food plate and follow these instructions. Compare with a partner.

- a Find a food that you eat every day.
- b Find two products made from milk.
- c Find a fruit and vegetable that you like.
- d Find a food that you don't like.



- Fruit and vegetables
- Grains, cereals and potatoes
- Dairy products
- Meat, fish, nuts and eggs
- Fats and sugars

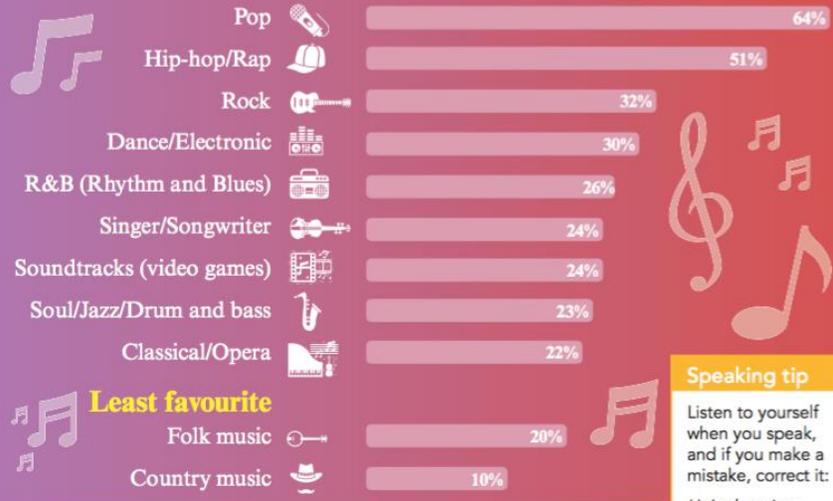
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Health science: health food and malaria	<p>Healthy eating – why is it important?</p> <p><b>Values:</b> Helping each other</p> <p><b>Critical thinking:</b> Recognising symptoms</p>
Art and design: Street art and optical illusions	<p>What makes an ideal place to live?</p> <p><b>Values:</b> Looking after our environment</p> <p><b>Critical thinking:</b> Compare and share opinions of urban/rural life</p>
Maths: Time zones, Problem solving	<p>Interpreting time zones</p> <p>Comparing cultures</p> <p><b>Values:</b> Valuing others</p>
Science: The human brain	<p>Assessing risk</p> <p><b>Values:</b> Being inclusive</p> <p><b>Critical thinking:</b> Interpreting numbers</p>

# Lower secondary topics

## Speaking

- 1 Listen to these pieces of music. First rank them: 5 stars for the one you like best, 1 star for the one you like least. Then say which of the following genres they belong to.

### Favourite music genres 16- to 19-year-olds



### Least favourite



### Speaking tip

Listen to yourself when you speak, and if you make a mistake, correct it:

*He's also given money for studentships – I mean, scholarships – at Cambridge University.*

## Listening

- 2 Listen to these teenagers talking about music. How many genres of music do they mention?

Use of English	Cross-curricular links	Vocabulary	21st-century skills
Comparatives and superlatives of adjectives Demonstrative, indefinite and quantitative pronouns Comparatives and superlatives of adverbs Comparative adverb structures Multi-word verbs	Science Biology	Geographical features Wildlife	Learning to learn: Do some research to find out more about a scientific process; give a presentation called 'Why is the sky blue?' Social responsibility: Give advice to a new student Critical thinking: Review what you have learned and talk about what particularly interests you; write a scene to continue a narrative Creative thinking: Write questions for a multiple-choice quiz Collaborative working: Pair work, group work, projects
Past continuous Verbs followed by prepositions Past perfect simple Past perfect in reported speech	History	Leaders, rulers and explorers Artists, musicians and writers	Learning to learn: Use subject-specific vocabulary to discuss a figure from history; find out about the people from a period of history who are remembered today Social responsibility: Understand how leaders, rulers and explorers contribute to society Critical thinking: Compare historical figures and their achievements Creative thinking: Role-play an interview about who will be remembered in 50 years' time Collaborative working: Pair work, group work, projects
Present perfect with indefinite time adverbs Present perfect continuous Preposition + noun Reported speech: questions and statements	Literature	Types of story, opinions of stories Useful words and phrases for telling a story	Learning to learn: Understand the concept of genre in storytelling; practise adding detail and variety to a narrative description Social responsibility: Appreciate traditions of storytelling from different cultures Critical thinking: Analyse the appeal of stories and storytelling; summarise a story Creative thinking: Write a story by adapting an original Collaborative working: Pair work, group work, projects
Use the correct verb tense what (= 'the thing(s) which') Participle clauses Questions	Music Statistics	Genres of music Types of music, instruments, performers	Learning to learn: Understand the concept of genre in music; learn to correct mistakes as you are speaking Social responsibility: Appreciate the music of other cultures; understand the part music can play in everyone's life and in particular in the lives of people with disabilities Critical thinking: Identify inconsistencies in what people say; identify implied meaning Creative thinking: Compare and analyse three pieces of music Collaborative working: Pair work, group work, projects



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# A historical perspective

- ▶ The PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) model versus The Communicative Approach
- ▶ Learner-centred approach
- ▶ Topics become the vehicle through which language content and structures are taught
- ▶ Investigating and finding out about the world through English





## ▶▶ Young learners *versus* secondary learners

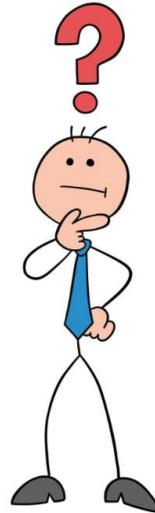
*The main differentiating trait is that YLs learn indirectly and holistically rather than directly (Cameron 2005)*





## Intrinsic *versus* Extrinsic motivation

What do young learners talk about?



*'Real, age-appropriate, here and now experiences.'* (Nunan 2011)

# What are the benefits of topic-based learning?

- 
- Learner-centred approach promoting independent work and creative thinking
  - Creates a 'real' need to communicate and listen
  - Appeals to different intelligences and learning styles
  - Caters for mixed ability in the classroom
  - Develops 21st century thinking skills, such as the ability to interpret, estimate, compare and contrast, classify, sequence, experiment and describe processes
  - Opportunities for us to develop our skills and knowledge as teachers
  - Helps to empower students for higher education

# Considerations when implementing topic-based learning in the classroom

- **Aims:** What do I want my pupils to achieve?
- **Concepts:** Are they familiar with these in their mother tongue? Are they age-appropriate?
- **Skills required:** listening, speaking, reading, writing
- **Strategies/tools:** e.g. bar graphs, pie charts, timelines etc...
- **Vocabulary required:** productive/receptive
- **Grammar/sentence patterns/ language functions**



## Aims

## Activate previous knowledge

# 9

# Robots

### We are going to...

- learn and talk about different types of robot
- describe and compare what robots can do
- practise ordering food from a robot waiter
- write instructions for our personal robots
- read part of a story about a family with robots
- design and talk about a robot, write and perform a song.



### Getting started

How can robots help us?

- a What do robots do for us?
- b How many kinds of robots can you think of?

# Personalisation

# Grammar

## > 9.1 What are robots like?

We are going to...

- learn and talk about different types of robot.



### 1 Talk about robots.

Close your eyes and imagine a robot. Describe it to your partner. Ask your partner to draw your robot.



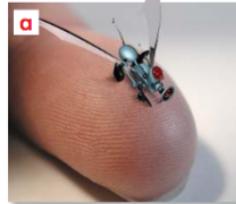
### 2 Listen and match to the pictures.

Robots come in many shapes and sizes. Listen and match the captions to the pictures.

1 humanoid robot

2 RoboBee

3 space arm



### 3 Listen again and complete the table.

Then answer the questions. If you need help remembering centimetres and metres, look at the **Picture dictionary** page 162.

	humanoid robot	RoboBee	space arm
length or height			
weight			
one thing it does			

- a Which is the longest robot?
- b Which is the smallest robot?
- c Which robot is the heaviest?
- d Which robot is the lightest?



# Lesson Planning

**Aims:** to describe and compare what robots do

**Concepts:** to understand and talk about abilities

**Skills required:** listening and reading

**Vocabulary:** receptive: *samples, search, rescue ...*

**Grammar:** can + infinitive

## > 9.2 The uses of robots

We are going to...

- describe and compare what robots can do.

**1 Talk about robots.**

We often use robots for things that are difficult for us to do or things that we don't want to do. Look at the pictures below and guess what these robots do.



**2 What can these robots do?**

Listen and match the titles to the paragraphs.

Robots can help with delicate operations

Robots can go where we can't survive

Robots can go where it's dangerous for us

Robots can do jobs that people find boring

- 1 Some robots go to places where it is hard or impossible for people to go. They take photos, measure things or collect **samples** for scientists to study. Robots with wheels have **explored** the moon and the planet Mars. Some robots go deep into the ocean to explore plants and animals that live there. They also **search** for old ships on the ocean floor.
- 2 Other robots can go into dangerous places where there have been fires, earthquakes or explosions. Robots can search for people to **rescue**. They can find people and send us information. They can move walls or things that fall.
- 3 Some robots do jobs that are repetitive. They make cars and other things in **factories**. They are often faster and stronger than people especially when they make big or heavy things.



Blue Dragon robot moving over a pile of debris.





Creative, independent  
thinkers!



## > 9.6 Project challenge

### Project A: Design a robot for a specific purpose

- 1 Work with a partner.  
Think about a person or a situation where a robot could make life much better.
- 2 Define what your robot will do and how it will do it. Include different features.
- 3 Describe how your robot will look.
- 4 Make a picture or a model of your robot.
- 5 Present your robot to the class and explain what it can do and why.

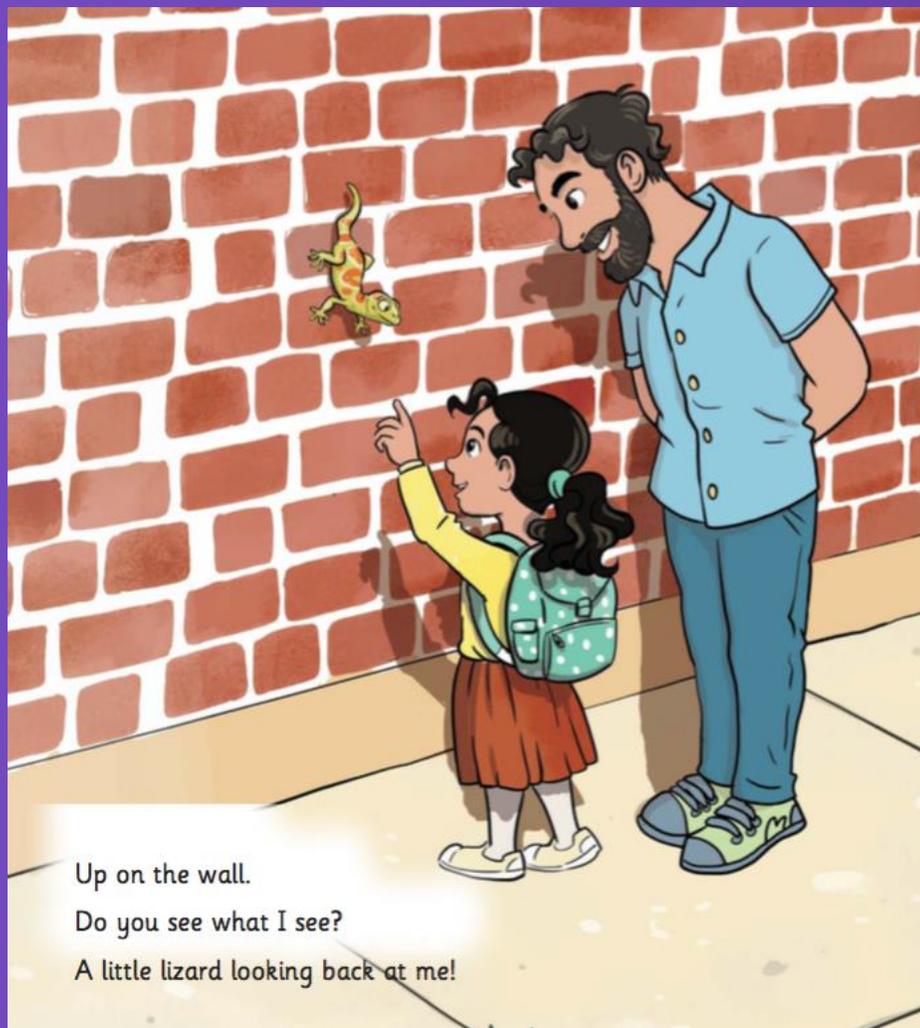
#### Speaking tip

Practise talking  
about your robot  
with your partner.  
Help each other  
fix any mistakes.





# The World around us



Up on the wall.  
Do you see what I see?  
A little lizard looking back at me!

## 1.6 Read and respond

### 2 Act it out!

Do the actions as you say this poem.

Look left. Look right.  
Look up and down.



### 3 Values: It's a wonderful world.

How do you think the girl feels when she sees:



tiny flowers?



birds?



red leaves?



a lizard?



happy



curious



surprised

### 4 What do you see on your way to school?

Write about what you see and draw a picture.

On the way to school,  
I see **flowers** and **a bee**.  
I feel **curious**.

# Quizzes and surveys

## > 8.3 Rainforest resources

### We are going to...

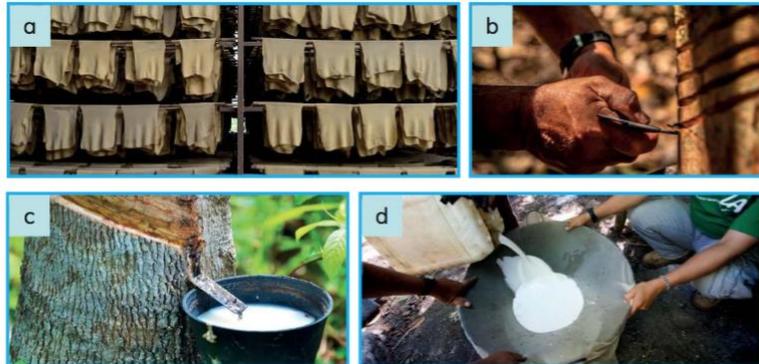
- talk about products and materials we use from the rainforest.

- 1 **Word study:** Which of these products do you have in your home right now? Match the words to the pictures. What do you think they have in common?

bouncy ball    3 bananas    4 coffee



- 53 2 **Listen** and check your ideas. Does anything surprise you?
- 53 3 What other products come from the rainforests? Listen again and write a list.
- 54 4 Listen to a class presentation and label the pictures a–d about the process of making natural rubber.



## Investigative work

## > 8.1 What do you know about rainforests?

### We are going to...

- listen and find out about rainforests.



- 1 **Vocabulary:** What do you know about rainforests? Try this quiz.

- The largest rainforest is in...  
a Africa                      b Asia                      c South America
- How tall can trees grow in the rainforests?  
a more than 30 metres    b less than 20 metres    c 15 metres
- What's the top part of the rainforest called?  
a the forest floor            b the canopy              c the understory
- Rainforests are home to what percentage of the world's plants, animals and insects?  
a 20%                      b 50%                      c 80%
- Every second, humans cut down an area of the rainforest the size of...  
a an Olympic swimming pool    b a football pitch            c a basketball court

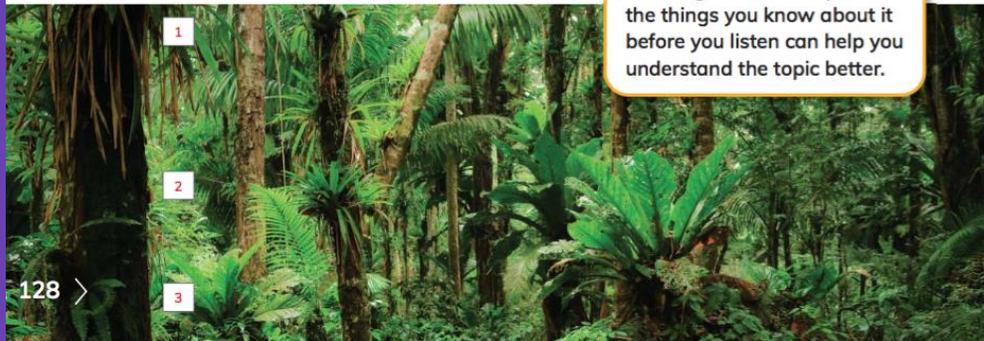


- 49 2 **Listen** and check your answers to the quiz.
- 49 3 **Listen** again and label the picture of the rainforest using these words.  
a forest floor    b understory    c canopy

### Listening tip

#### Predicting content

Thinking about the topic and the things you know about it before you listen can help you understand the topic better.



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# Poetry



## > 8.5 Poems: A Visit with Mr Tree Frog and If I Were a Sloth

### We are going to...

- read two poems about animals which live in the rainforest.

1 **Talk:** What's your favourite animal? What group of animals do frogs belong to below? Think of more examples for each group.



2 **Read and listen** to the poem. Match the illustrations to a line in the poem.

### A visit with Mr Tree Frog

1 I have a tiny **buddy**,

2 Tree Frog is his name.

3 He flew in from Brazil

4 In his tiny toy plane

5 He rattles when he speaks.

6 He's greener than green grass.

7 He is a tree hugger

8 That really is first class.

9 He has **bright** orange toes

10 That **wiggle** in the night.

11 He's a **mellow** fellow

12 That does not like to fight.

13 He dines on crickets and flies,

14 And moths are for a treat.

15 He's not the average **guy**

16 You find on city streets.

**Glossary**

**buddy:** friend

**mellow:** smooth and soft

**guy:** man

18 He was born in a forest,

19 A forest with **warm** rain.

20 He is an earthy treasure

21 That has a claim to fame.

22 He has a magic **slime**

23 That can **cure** laziness.

24 His slime can cure the world,

25 And yet he's poisonous.

26 His eyes are really red.

27 They pop up like **snaps**.

28 He **blinks** when he's resting.

29 During the day he naps.

30 He is here to brainstorm

31 About our planet so green.

32 He's a **wonder** of our world.

33 The cutest I've ever seen.

*Kathy Paysen*

**Glossary**

**slime:** a sticky liquid

**snap:** to take a lot of photos quickly



# Science through Art!

## 5 Our brains

### We are going to...

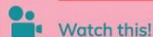
- do memory and brain experiments
- discover interesting facts about our brains
- use the zero conditional to talk about the body's involuntary actions
- discuss what's good for the brain and how we should protect it
- write a scientific report about an experiment
- read a poem *The girl who thought in pictures.*



### Getting started

#### What's amazing about our brains?

- Look carefully at each of the sculptures. What can you see in each one?
- What do you think the artist's message is about the brain? Discuss as a group.
- Which one do you like best? Give reasons why.



Watch this!

## 5 Our brains

### > 5.2 The amazing human brain



#### We are going to...

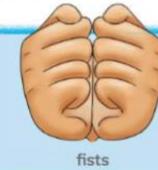
- discover interesting facts about our brains.

1 **Talk:** What does the human brain look like? How big do you think it is?

2 **Draw** a life-size picture of the brain.

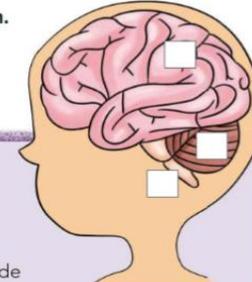
3 **Read** this description about the size and colour of the brain. Compare these measurements to your own drawing. How accurate were you?

The Human brain is a wrinkly, grey organ, the size of two fists put together. It weighs 1.3 kg. It's 16 cm long, 14 cm wide and 10 cm deep. It controls everything we do from learning, breathing and feeling emotions. It uses 20% of all your energy and stops growing when you are about 20.



4 **Read and listen** to the text. Number the parts of the brain.

brain stem    cerebrum    cerebellum



The brain is like the body's computer because it controls everything we do. The brain has three main parts:

The cerebrum, which is the biggest part of the brain, has a left and right side. The left side is usually better at problem solving and maths. It also controls your speech. The right side is more creative and helps us to understand music, colours, shapes and art.

The cerebellum is located at the back of the brain and is much smaller than the cerebrum. It controls your balance, **movement** and coordination.

The brain stem connects the rest of the brain to the spinal cord, which runs down your neck and back. It controls the body's functions such as **breathing**, **digestion** and **blood circulation**. It's like the brain's secretary because it sorts through all the messages sent from the 100 billion tiny cells called neurons located throughout the body. They send information from your body to your brain and back again at an incredible 240 km per hour – just like a high-speed train!

# Mental well-being

## 3 Our society

### > 3.5 Focus on ... Finland

#### In this lesson you will...

- read and understand an article about the happiest nation in the world
- discuss what makes a country a good place to live.

- Where is Finland? What do you know about it?

#### Reading

- 1 Read the article. If you had to tell someone three interesting things about Finland, what would you tell them?

### Is everybody happy?

The World Happiness Report compares countries to find out how people feel about where they live. It looks at income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support and generosity.

According to the most recent report, Finland is the happiest nation in the world. It was top of the table, followed by Denmark, Norway and Iceland.

And you don't have to be Finnish to be happy. You just have to live there! Immigrants to Finland are also the happiest in the world. 'It's not about Finnish DNA. It's the way life is lived,' says John Helliwell, professor of Economics at the University of British Columbia.

Finns pay quite a lot of money in tax, but they are generous and they have a great sense of community. 'They do care about each other,' Professor Helliwell says. 'That's the kind of place people want to live.'

According to one of the editors of the report, people are happier if they live in societies where there aren't big differences between rich and poor, so that most people can enjoy a similar quality of life. In Finland, healthcare and

**FILE**  
Finland  
**Capital:** Helsinki  
**Population:** 5.5 million  
**Life expectancy:** 81.73 years  
**Wealth:** GDP USD\$48,685 per capita

education are free. Half of Finns give regularly to charity and almost a third regularly give up time to volunteer.

School students in Finland are not only happy in their daily lives, they also enjoy life at school and do well. The typical ratio of teachers to students is 1 : 12. At the age of 15, in maths and science, Finnish students are in sixth place when compared with other countries.

Children in Finland don't have to start school until they are seven. They rarely have homework until they are at secondary school. They have very few tests and exams. They have 75 minutes of free time during the school day (whereas in the USA students only have 27 minutes). And they have a summer break that lasts 10 to 11 weeks.

You can see why Finland is number 1 in the happiness league!

## 3 Our society

### > 3.6 Be happy!

#### In this lesson you will...

- find out about a school where lessons to promote happiness are part of the school day
- use the text to talk about activities at school

- Where is Finland? What do you know about it?

#### Reading

- 1 Read the text. Do you agree with what Julia Annas says?

According to the philosopher Julia Annas, 'Happiness is not a matter of the stuff you have, or whether you are beautiful, healthy, powerful or rich. A happy life is not one in which you just have these things – after all, plenty of

people have all these things but in no way live happily.'

What Julia Annas says is based on the definition of happiness by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said happiness was doing well and living well.

#### Listening



- 2 Listen to these students at a school where lessons to promote students' happiness are being added to the school day. How do they feel about their extra lessons?
- 3 Listen again and look at the chart. Which three activities is each person doing or going to do this term?

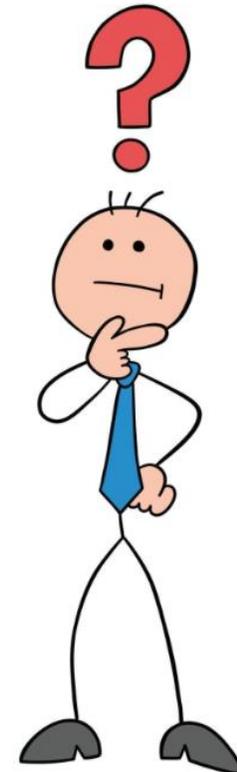
a Aran      b Prija      c David

Sport and exercise	Creative activities	Cultural development/skills
ballet	art appreciation	astronomy
badminton	drama	book club
basketball	ceramics	chess
football development	choir	computer programming
running	circus skills	debating society
self-defence	creative writing	handwriting
advanced swimming	guitar group	robotics
table tennis	origami	learning another language
volleyball	painting	

# The Magic Key!

***Generate curiosity,  
spark imaginations!***

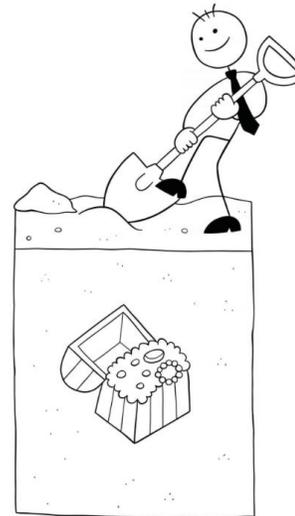
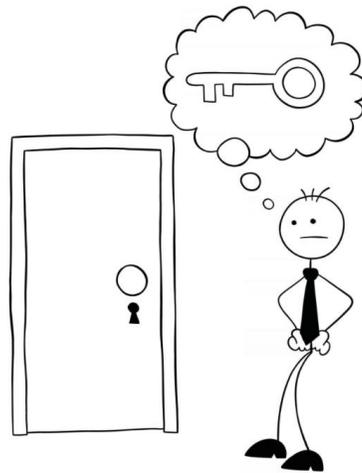
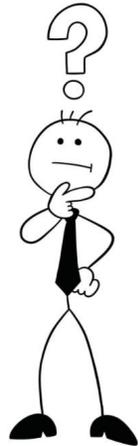
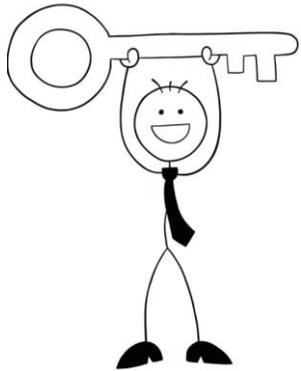
What do keys open?  
Doors, boxes, treasure  
troves ...





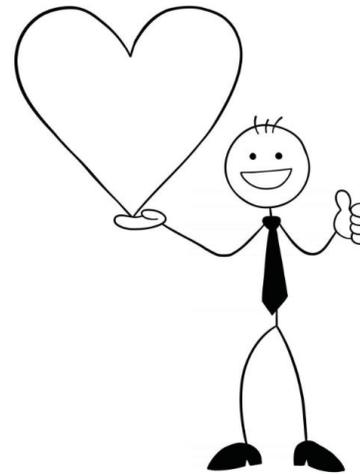
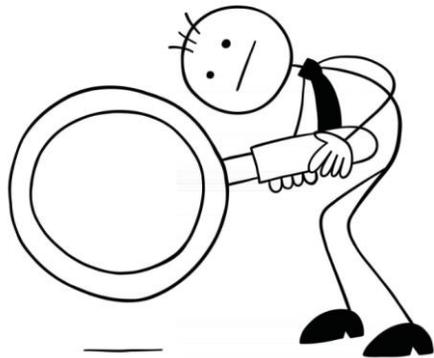
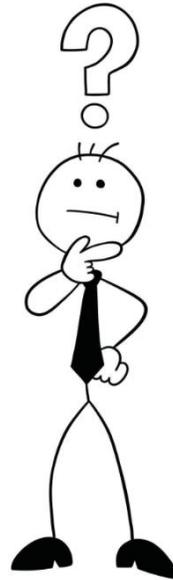
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# Picture Story





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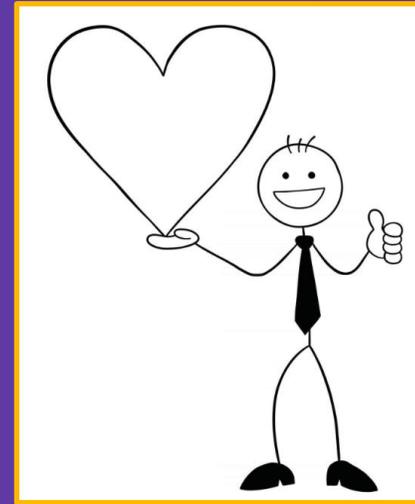




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**Thank you!**

**Any questions?**

