

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class

The following eight themes are suggested as starting points for discussions and creativity.

<https://exhibition.savesoil.cc/exhibition-themes/>

Everyday Encounters

That old pair of jeans, the desk you lean on, your favourite novel, a delicious chocolate cake, celebratory flowers and the vase you place them in... How many of the objects you encounter every day come from the soil?

Pick up or point to an everyday object, like a wooden desk, a notebook, cotton cloth or a coffee mug. Ask the students where it comes from.

“The shop.”

“Okay, before the shop? Where does the stuff from which it is made come from?”

Keep on asking until the students figure out that it comes from the soil. Do this with a few different objects, seeing whether together you can figure out where it comes from and whether it comes from the soil.

- Note that (non-bio) plastic is made from oil which comes from decomposed organic matter, which comes from soil. Metal comes from minerals, which come from rocks which are found in the ground.

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class Everyday Encounters / Our Very Body

- See *The Soil Song Game* for a fun way to explore this with youngsters.

So many of the everyday objects we encounter come from the soil. Can you convey this creatively?

- If you are doing artwork, you may want to try painting everyday objects using soil.

Our Very Body

When we were born our parents could hold us in their arms. How we have grown! And although our feet are not anchored into the ground, it is the soil that has provided us with the nutrition that has made our very body. We are made of soil!

Continuing on from the everyday objects, ask, “What about us? Where does this body come from?” Explore this with the class.

“From our mothers.”

“How tall are you?”

“One metre thirty.”

“I don't think your mother gave birth to a body of that size! Where does this body come from?”

The students should come to realise it comes from food, which comes from the soil. (The FAO estimates that 95% of our food comes from soil.)

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class

Our Very Body / Billions of Life Forms

Our body comes from soil.

- You can play the Save Soil Anthem music video which touches on this: <https://youtu.be/1oNeeCoS-RM>

Can you creatively convey that your body comes from soil?

- If you are doing photography, you may want to try applying soil face and body paint!

Billions of Life Forms

One teaspoon of soil contains more microorganisms than there are people on this planet. Soil is just teeming with life, some large and some small!

Ask your students to tell you what lives in the soil and discuss the different creatures you find there.

- Play one of *The Earthworm Quiz*, *The Soil Life Quiz for Younger Children* or *The Soil Life Quiz for Older Children* to learn more about the life in the soil.
- Play the BBC Ideas soil video: <https://youtu.be/OiLITHMVcRw>
- Explore the Chaos of Delight website: <https://www.chaosofdelight.org/>

Can you convey all the wonderful life that lives in the soil creatively?

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class Beneath My Feet

Beneath My Feet

*What do you feel when you sink your hands or feet into the soil?
What else do you find on or in the soil under your feet?*

Now it's time to go outside and find some soil!

Take a look at the soil. How would you describe it? What words would you use to describe its colour? What creatures can you find in it? What is growing in it? What else is there in the soil? Feel the soil. Is it hard or soft? Dry or wet? Warm or cold? What words would you use to describe its texture?

If you walk barefoot, what does it feel like? Do you like walking barefoot?

Does soil have a smell? How would you describe it?

What sounds do you hear on the surface of the soil? (You may want to have a read of this:

<https://knowablemagazine.org/article/living-world/2022/life-soil-was-thought-be-silent-what-if-it-is-nt>)

What do you think soil might taste like to an earthworm or other creature?

The soil is different in different places near where you live, have you noticed? How does the soil change depending on where you are? Which soil seems to have the most life in it?

Can you convey your experience of being in touch with soil creatively?

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class

Abundance

Abundance

The life of the soil comes in such abundance, whether it's the dense myriad of life in a jungle or the variety of fruit and vegetables produced on our farms and sold in our markets at harvest time.

Some discussion points on the abundance of soil:

- When we talk about harvest time what do you think of? Almost every culture in the world celebrates harvest time, why do you think that is?
- When you go to the supermarket, what are the different types of fruits and vegetables you can buy? How many varieties are there? What different types of fruit and vegetables can be grown in your country? What about other countries?
- When you think of a rainforest or a jungle, what comes to mind? How much life do you imagine there is in just one cubic metre of rainforest?

How does all this abundance depend on soil?

Can you creatively convey the abundance that comes from the soil?

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class Land / SOS

Land

Soil, as well as our interactions with it, forms the basis of many of our landscapes; forests, gardens, parks, farmland, city streets and wetlands all spring from a foundation of soil.

Some discussion points on the connection between soil and land:

- What different landscapes are there near where you live? How is the land used? Is the soil visible?
- What do you imagine the soil is like under those different landscapes? And how does the landscape depend on soil?
- How would the landscapes look different without soil?
- You might want to watch this video about how soil is created:
<https://youtu.be/vbgM54TXdnk>

Can you convey the landscapes creatively?

SOS

Our soil is dying. We are losing one acre of soil every second. The UN estimates that by 2050 90% of the world's soil will be degraded unless we act now.

All over the world, soil is becoming increasingly unable to sustain life because it is losing its organic matter.

Suggestions for Introducing the Theme of Soil in a Creative Class SOS / Hope

Soil is losing its ability to store water and sequester carbon. It is being washed away and turned into desert. We are losing one acre of soil every second.

- You may want to watch our video about soil degradation: <https://youtu.be/ht1xFibWfik>

Can you convey what soil degradation means to you?

Hope

We can act now. We can turn this around. There are solutions and they are not difficult. We can shift to more regenerative ways of farming, so that our soil becomes more healthy year by year instead of less, and helps us reduce climate change emissions instead of cause them. To make this happen, first we must spread this awareness to everyone.

We must ensure that all soil has a minimum of 3-6% organic matter so that it is healthy. There are many ways of increasing organic content in soil that farmers all over the world have used successfully. If our governments put in the right policies this can happen everywhere and we can have a future with healthy soil.

Can you convey what that future might look like? Create a vision of a future where our soil is healthy and bountiful.