

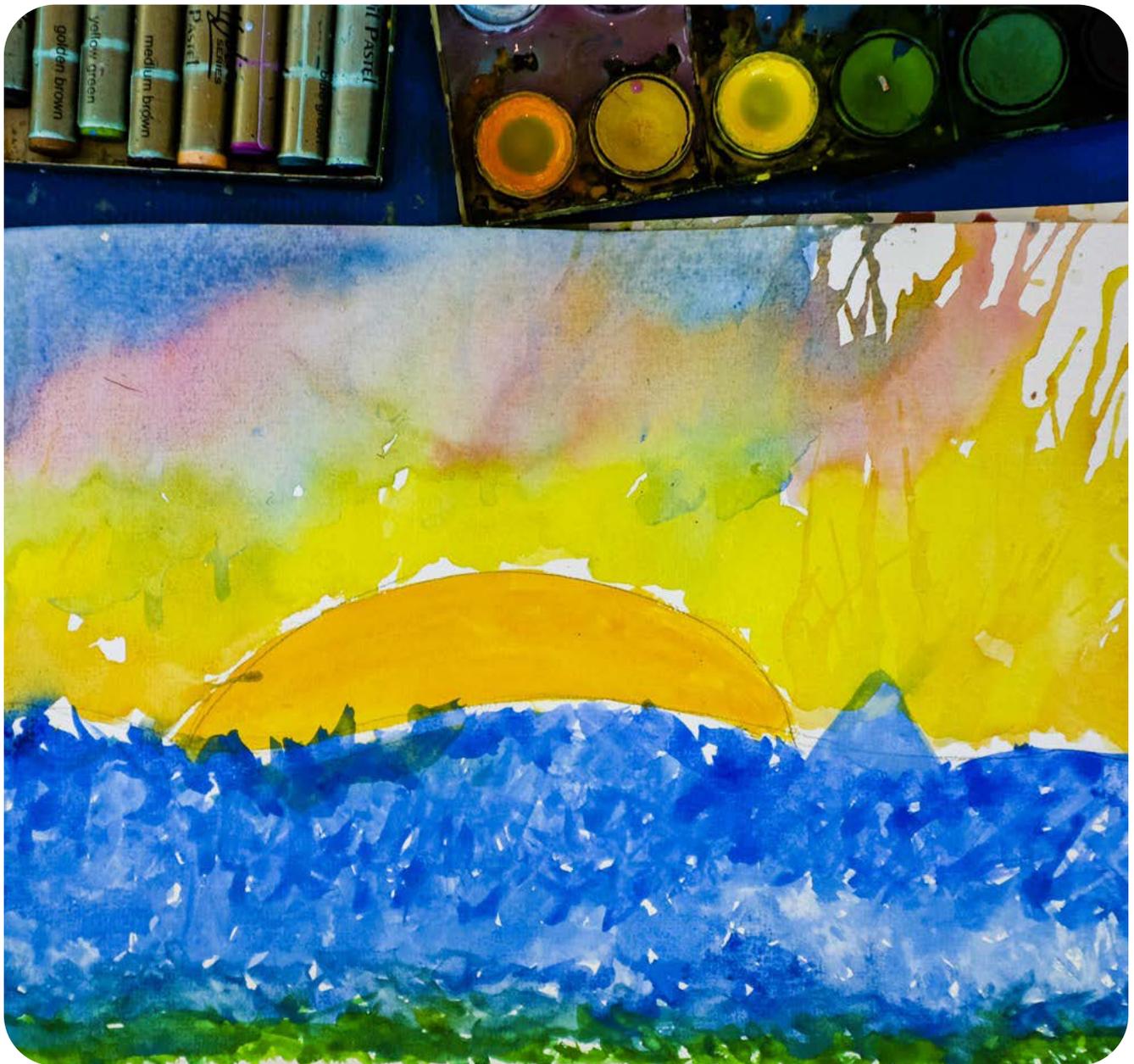


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Creative Acts for Climate Feelings



Acknowledgements

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For adults, parents and educators

It is normal for children (or anyone) to feel scared, anxious, sad, angry or hopeless about climate change and our warming planet. As the effects of global warming become more pronounced, we are all grappling with fears about the future. Many young people seem to be particularly concerned.¹ But adults are also struggling with big feelings about the environment. It's important to remember that all feelings are normal and necessary in this time of crisis. With any luck, we can continue to find joy, relaxation and solace in our daily lives and the natural environments we share and care for.

This booklet offers a set of creative activities that parents and educators can use to explore climate feelings alongside the children in their lives. It has been developed by a team of climate emotions, and arts and health experts at Black Dog Institute, The University of Sydney, and other community organisations. The activities are intended for primary-school aged children, but they could be adapted for people of all ages. This booklet is designed to be drawn and written on by a single person. However, most activities would also work well in a group setting. The activities in this booklet work best when they are facilitated by a supporting adult, who might also like to make, draw, write and reflect alongside the young person.

If they feel right, you can add these activities to your personal toolkit of ways to honour your emotions. These tools might help you to explore the following:

- What our emotions can tell us about our world and our place within it.
- How our emotions move through us (or us through them).
- How our feelings compel, or interfere with, acts of care for people and planet.

At their core, these activities are intended to carve out time and space to think and act differently. They invite us to pay attention to how we feel in ways that we might not otherwise.

If the idea of exploring climate feelings is alarming or uncomfortable to you, then consider working through your own responses before you try to proceed alongside a child or children (there is space for you on the next page to do this). There are many helpful groups and resources for adults who would like to engage with their climate emotions. One place to start is the Climate Feelings Space offered by Psychology for a Safe Climate (<https://www.climatefeelings.space/>).

As adults, our responsibility is to meet children where they are in their understanding of climate change and its impacts. This booklet uses child-friendly language to describe climate change and climate feelings. You might choose to read it alongside your child, or you might choose to introduce the activities in your own words.

The activities are designed to be open-ended, inviting children to share what they know and feel. They might be particularly helpful for children who are learning about climate change at school, or for those already sharing their worries or concerns. However, these activities are not intended as a replacement for professional psychological or psychiatric care.²

1. We know from global research that primary school-age children are aware of climate change, are often most vulnerable to its impacts, and that this affects them psychologically (e.g. see Burke, Sanson and Hoorn's summary: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-018-0896-9>). For example, 82% of 10–12 year olds interviewed in a US-based study about environmental problems expressed strong feelings of fear, sadness and anger (<https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2011.602131>). In recent Australian research, a top concern for school students when it comes to climate change was, "what can we do?" (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2024.02.017>).

2. These activities have been developed by Black Dog Institute and the University of Sydney. Every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in these activities. The user should not rely on the activities as a replacement for professional medical or psychiatric care, the contents of the activities are general in nature, and to the extent permitted by law the creators accept no legal liability whatsoever arising from or connected to the program.

Before you get started with the children in your life, take some time to reflect on your own climate feelings, using these open sentence prompts as a starting point. You might like to spend three minutes answering each question, without stopping, and without thinking too hard about what you are going to say:



When I think about climate change I feel...

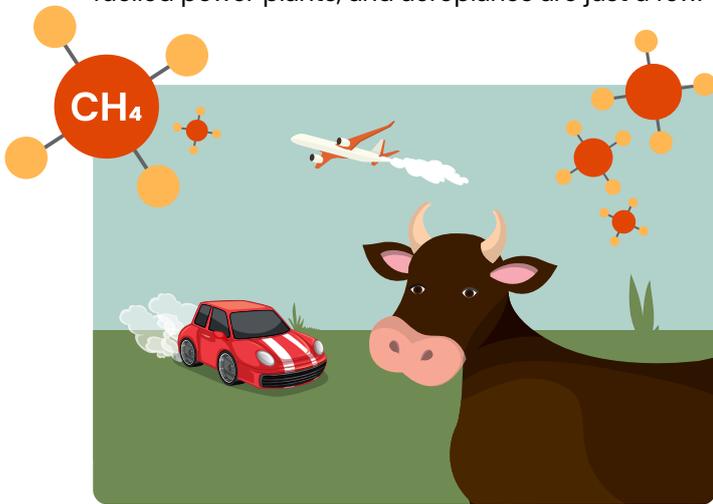


Some things I do to support myself emotionally in response to climate change are...

For adults and kids to read together

What is climate change?

You've probably started to learn about climate change at school, or maybe you've read about it at home. We know that human activity is making the world hotter. We are releasing more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which makes our planet warm up. All kinds of things emit greenhouse gases: cow farts, car fumes, fossil-fuelled power plants, and aeroplanes are just a few.



As the world gets hotter, nature and people are affected in lots of different ways. For example, climate change is making the weather less predictable, and more extreme. There are more heatwaves and fires, but in some places there can also be more rain, and big storms. Many plants and animals are also affected by climate change, and some of them have already lost the places where they live (their habitats).

The good news is that there are lots of things we can do to act on climate change. Each action we take – as individuals, in groups or through systems change – can make a difference. This booklet will help you explore some creative climate actions you might like to take.

What are climate feelings?

Even just reading about climate change now, you might have noticed feelings start to bubble around

inside you. Did you feel scared? Did you feel angry? Did you feel sad? Or maybe you felt determined to make a difference? Or hopeful because there are so many ways to act? People feel all kinds of things about climate change. And these feelings can change over time or sit there all together in a big feeling soup. You might not even have a name for the feeling. It could just be a tightness in your chest, or a heaviness in your body, or a fidgety leg, or a monkey mind that can't stop moving.

Sometimes, it's difficult to feel much about the big, complicated thing that people call "climate change". Or sometimes we might have lots of feelings: We might feel sad about an animal that we know is struggling, or angry about a forest that has been destroyed, or bewildered by the weather. We might also feel happy, relaxed, curious, or full of wonder when we spend time in our favourite natural places – a garden, a park, a beach, or somewhere else entirely. We might feel happy and sad, or relaxed and bewildered, especially if our favourite natural places have been changed or damaged by humans.

It's normal to have all these different feelings. In fact, they can be helpful: they let us know when things are not right in the world, and they also give us energy to do our best to fix what we can. They let us know how much we care about the planet.

But feeling too much can be hard. If we are sad or worried all the time, it can take our energy away. It can make it hard to concentrate. We might not be able to let the feelings pass so that we can focus on other things, like having fun.

In this booklet, we will use art to help you recognise some of the feelings you might have about climate change. When we start to notice our feelings, it makes it easier to let them sit there without taking over completely. We invite you to use art to share how you feel with other people, and to find out how art can be a way of taking action for the climate that is fun and joyful.

Why is art a good way to explore climate feelings?

Making and sharing art is a great way to explore how you feel, to think about new things, to make your body and your mind feel good, to share your experiences and emotions with others, and to help people learn about important things like climate change or how special our amazing planet is.

There are so many ways to make art (just like there are so many climate feelings). In this booklet there are some creative activities to help explore your climate emotions and to share them with others in ways that are interesting, fun, and new. These activities will help you to find out about yourself, and to remember why you, and others, care so much about our planet. We will make art for the trees, bees and seas. We will make art for ourselves, and to share with others: our families, our friends, and maybe even people we don't know yet.

And remember, everyone can make art! It doesn't matter if you make art all the time, or if this is your first time. Have fun, play and don't be afraid to make mistakes – making mistakes is the best way to learn something new.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is for you, and you can use it however you like! You can start at the beginning and work through to the end, or you can start in the middle. You can write and draw in this booklet, you can use it at home, or you can take it with you when you go on adventures.

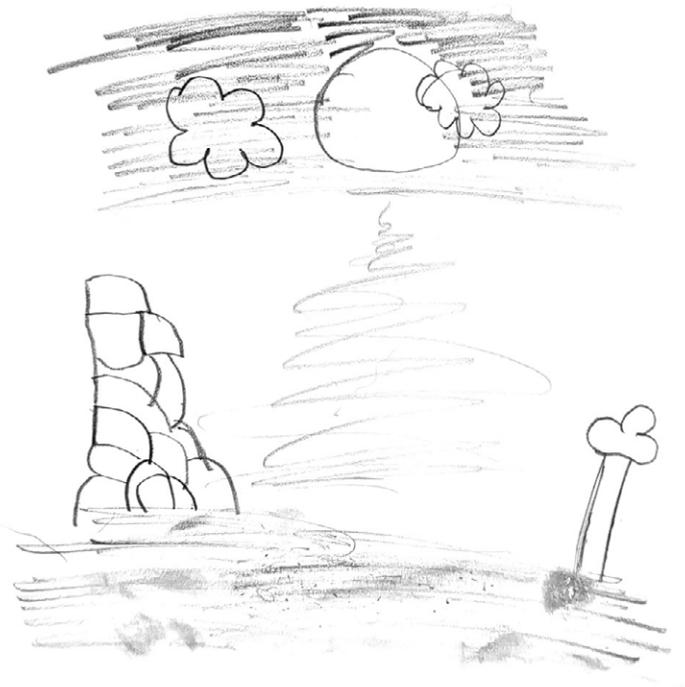
The first activities will help you get into the zone and start feeling creative.

We have loved trying out these activities and hope you will too.

Happy making!

Chloe, Priya and Di

P.S. If you'd like to share what you've made with our research team, please send us an email with your artworks, writing or anything else. Also feel free to get in touch if you have any questions. Find us at creativeacts@blackdog.org.au



If doing any of these activities makes you feel sad, or worried, then it can be good to talk to someone you trust, like a family member or a friend.

You can also call:

Kids Helpline on [1800 55 1800](tel:1800551800)

or visit their website:

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

If you live outside of Australia, you can use this website to find support near you:

<https://findahelpline.com/>

Remember, you are not alone, and there are people who can help and support you.



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Quick draw your special place

Sometimes it is not easy to make art or do something creative. It can be hard to get started, and you might feel worried about mistakes or making that first mark on paper. But remember, there is no right or wrong way of making art!

Let's do some super-fast drawings to help get in the mood to be creative, and to start thinking about the special places in our lives. Spending time in special places, especially natural places, can make us feel good and help us have good feelings.

What you will need:

- Something to draw with (pens, pencils, crayons, marker pens, charcoal etc).
- Something to keep time with (a phone, a stopwatch, a clock).
- Optional: someone to keep time for you.
- Optional: some music to play to help you get into a creative mood.





Let's get started!

Get your materials and find a comfortable spot for drawing.

Think about a place in the world that you love, and that makes you feel good. Maybe it's the beach, a place where you bush walk, a community garden, your local park, your backyard?

Get your drawing tool and get ready to draw in the space below (or you can find your own blank sheet of paper).

Set your timer, you now have just 30 seconds to draw how your special place makes you feel. And just to make it tricky, you must do this drawing with your eyes closed (or looking away from the paper)! Don't worry, you do not have to draw something recognisable, you can scribble, make lines, or shapes, whatever feels comfortable.

Okay, start the timer, close your eyes and draw!



Quick draw your special place



Set your timer again. Take 30 seconds and try drawing how you feel when you are in a special place in a different way. You could use colour this time or make marks in a different way (try being really quick, or really slow, or really wriggly). Remember to close your eyes or look away while you are drawing.

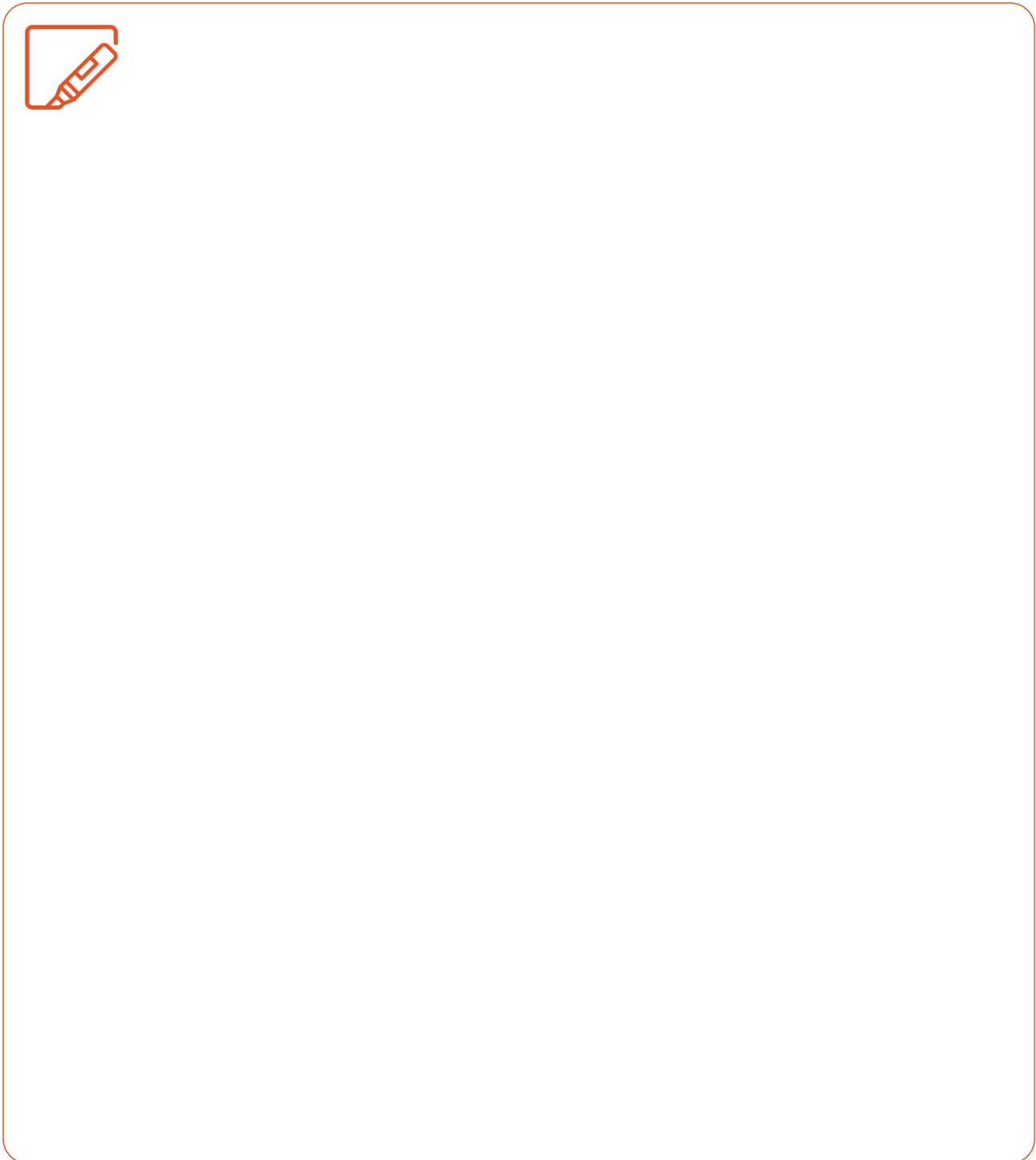


A large, empty rectangular area with rounded corners, outlined in a thin orange border, intended for drawing.

Quick draw your special place



Okay, final quick draw! This time, set your timer for 5 minutes and keep your eyes open. Now draw yourself (and anyone else you would like) in your special place. If you want to take longer, that is OK! Take as long as you like to make this drawing.





What did you draw? How does it look? Does it represent how you feel?
You could write some words down here to remember.



HOT TIP

You can do this activity over and over again. Sometimes, just giving yourself a short amount of time to do something can make it lots more fun. Try to use different kinds of paper and different kinds of pens, pencils and crayons. How do the materials you choose shape the way that you draw? You could even try drawing with things that you find in your special place. What happens to your drawing when you attach your pencil or pen to a long stick?



Well done! Now you have got your creative energy flowing, maybe you would like to try another activity!



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Picture your world

Photographs are a great way to share your thoughts and feelings about nature and what is happening to nature because of climate change. In this activity, you will use a camera or smartphone to take pictures of things in nature that help share how you feel.

What you will need:

- A camera or smartphone





Let's get started!

Go outside and take pictures of living or natural things around you. You can take photos of plants, animals, trees, the sky, or anything else you like.

You might like to think about your composition: How will you choose what is inside and outside of your picture? Do you want to show lots of things living together, or only one thing very close up?

Choose your favourite picture and write about what it means to you in the space below. You can write a few sentences or tell a story about the picture.

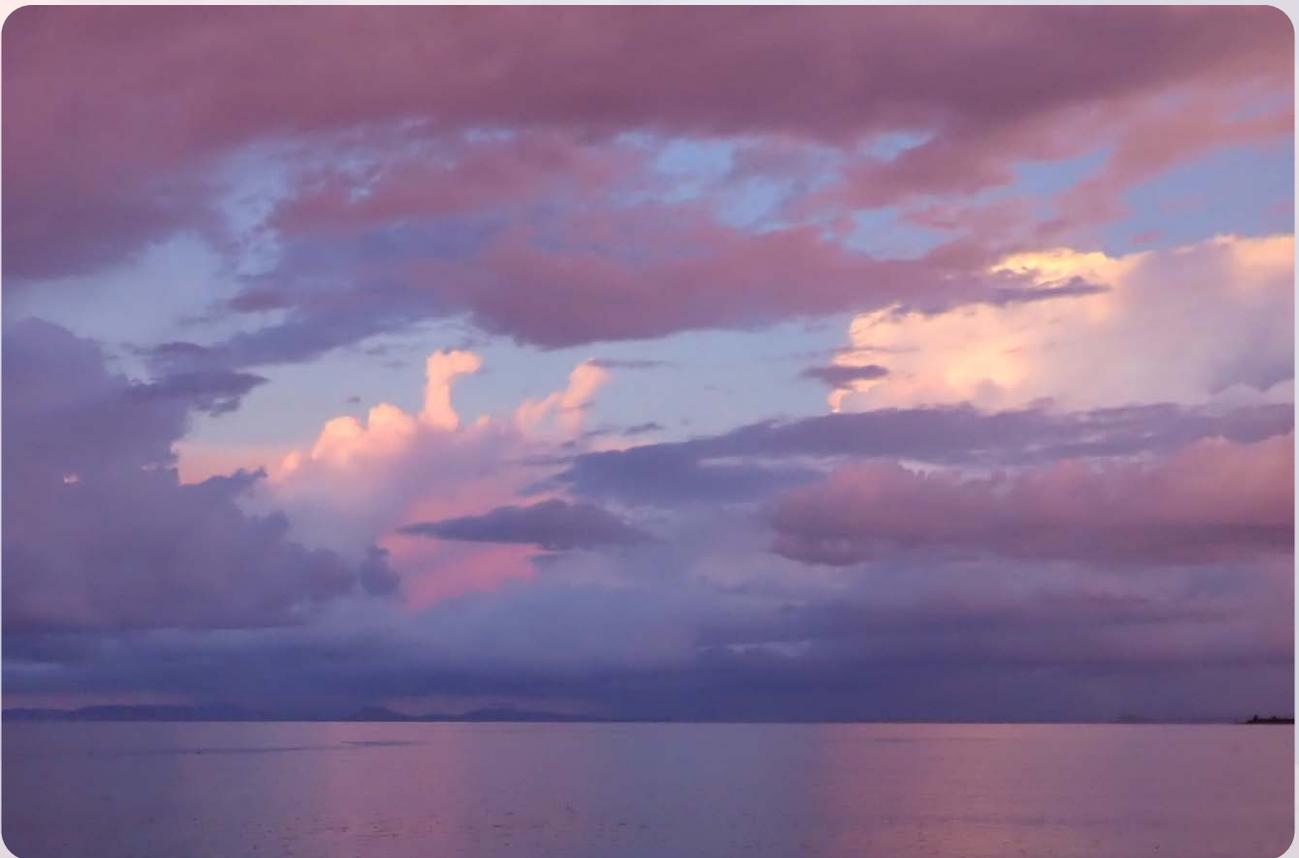
A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin orange border, intended for writing. In the top-left corner of the box, there is a small orange icon of a pencil pointing towards the bottom-right.

Share your picture and story with your friends, family, or teacher.





Think about what you learned from taking the pictures. Did you notice anything new or interesting? How do you feel about nature and climate change after doing this activity?







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Do nothing

**Sometimes, life can get very busy.
Sometimes, it's hard to slow down.**

When we learn about climate change, sometimes it can make us feel that we really need to do something, or lots of things, to help the planet.

But sometimes, we need to be quiet and still. We need to learn to notice the world around us, and our place in it, before we can work out what we might like to do to help.

Making art is one great way of noticing.

But sometimes we don't even have to make anything at all.

FUN FACT

The composer John Cage made a very famous composition called 4'33". He instructs musicians to not play their instruments for four minutes and 33 seconds. The performers and the audience sit in silence, doing nothing.

What you will need:

- Optional: someone to keep time for you





Let's get started!

Make sure you feel comfortable. Do you want to be still and do nothing right now? If not, you could try this out another time.

Find a place to sit, lie or stand. It could be outdoors, it could be on your bed, it could be cuddling a parent, a friend, or a special toy. Do nothing for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. You might like to bring your attention to what you hear in the space around you. *For John Cage, the composition was the everyday sounds captured by the silence.*



What did that feel like? What did you notice? Write or draw your response here:



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Do anything



Artists need free time to play and experiment, and so do all of us!

Making art is a lovely way to spend special time with people you love.

This activity is very simple: for one week, spend time every day making anything that you like.

What you make doesn't have to be about climate change, or feelings, or anything at all. Just make something. You can mark the days here:



DAY 01

DAY 02

DAY 03

DAY 04

DAY 05

DAY 06

DAY 07



What was it like to make something every day?





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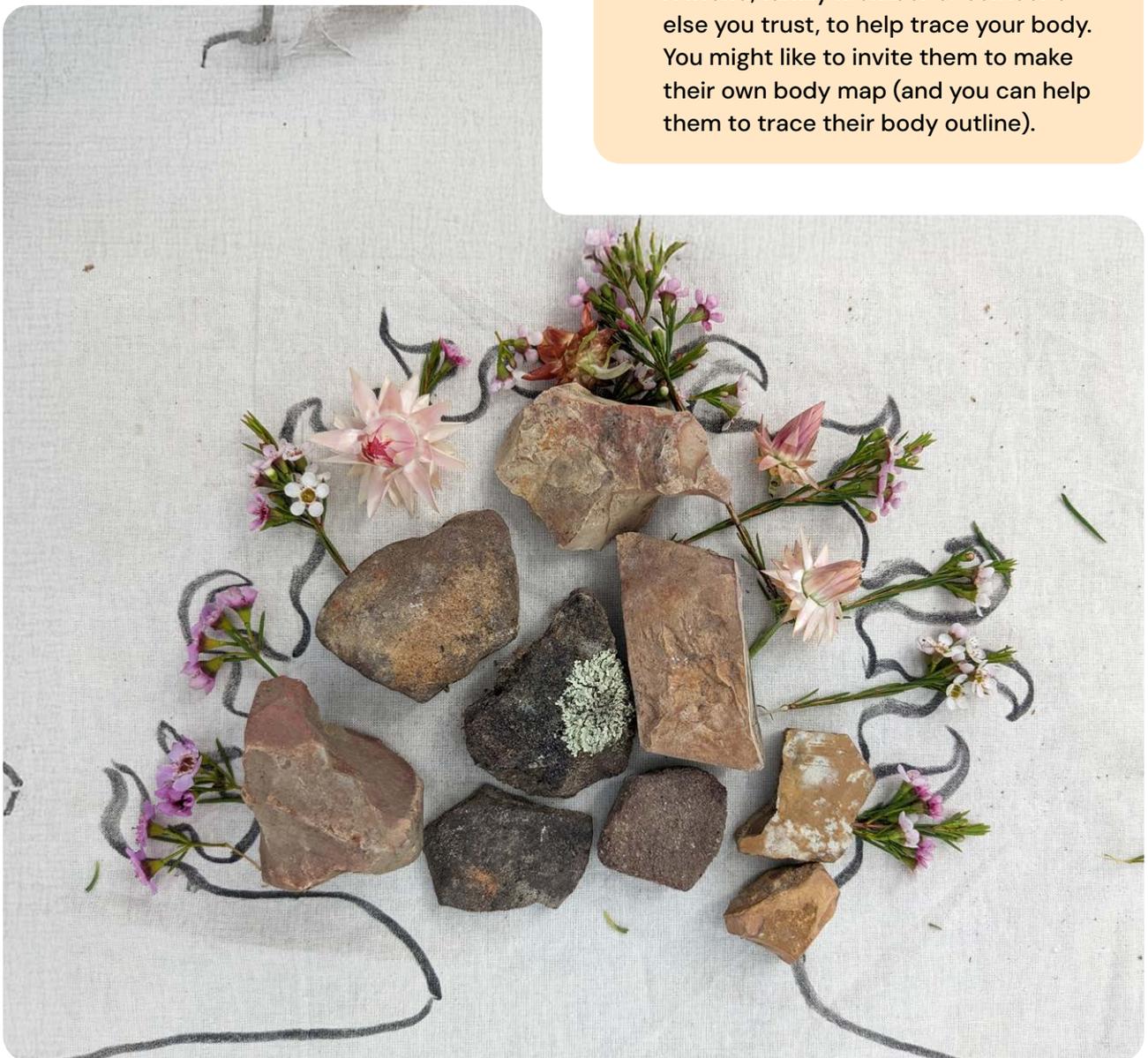
Climate in your body

A body map is an artwork you create to represent your body and how you feel.

To make a body map you trace an outline of your body onto a big sheet of paper or fabric and then you decorate it using drawing, painting or collage. Making a body map can be a great way to spend time thinking about your feelings and your experiences.

What you will need:

- A big sheet of butcher's paper, or a piece of fabric (like calico) that is big enough for you to lie down on without any part of your body touching the ground.
- A marker pen and anything else you'd like to make with like paints, pencils, crayons.
- A friend, family member or someone else you trust, to help trace your body. You might like to invite them to make their own body map (and you can help them to trace their body outline).





Let's get started!

Find a quiet place where you are comfortable. Lie or sit down and let your body relax. Take deep breaths and close your eyes if you like. When you are ready, consider how you feel about climate change. When you think about this are you relaxed, happy, calm, nervous, worried, sad, or another feeling? Remember there are no wrong or right feelings.

Now think about your body – where in your body do you feel these emotions? For example, maybe when you are nervous about climate change you feel it in your tummy? Or if you feel excited about doing something about climate, maybe you feel that in your heart?

When you are ready get up and get your paper or fabric. Spread it out and lie down on it. Pose your body in any shape you like (you could lie on your side, you could lie on your back with your arms and legs spread out, you could put your arms above your head.) Ask a friend or family member to trace your body using a pen or a marker.



HOT TIP

If you can't work on the floor, or it's not comfortable for you to lie down on your paper or fabric then you can use Blu-Tack to stick it to the wall. Then you can stand or sit against your paper/fabric and trace your outline that way. Or, if tracing your body isn't right for you, you could draw your body, or draw a symbol or shape to represent your body instead. In the next activity, we have a mini body map that you could use.

Now it's time to decorate your outline. Think back to when you were laying or sitting down. Where did you feel your climate emotions? Draw something that represents these feelings, on the places in your body where you felt these emotions.

You can draw something abstract (a line, a scribble, shapes) or draw something recognisable (an animal, a plant, a person, a place). For example, maybe you'll draw a tangle of lines in your chest if you feel tense. Or maybe you will draw a picture of you and your friends looking after a garden, at your head, to represent feeling hopeful. You could also write words onto your map, or glue pictures or photos onto it.

Keep going until you've decorated your body. You can decorate the area around your body outline too: Think about places that are special to you, or actions you want to take to address climate change, and draw them around your body shape.



HOT TIP

Tell your friend or family member about what you've made. If you've been working together, ask them to share what they've done.

FUN FACT

Priya, Chloe and their friends Barbara and Jen once sat under a big fig tree in a park and invited passersby to make a body map. Lots of kids and adults joined in. People made maps representing how they loved the parks, trees and flowers in their neighbourhoods. If you could ask anyone to make a body map, who would it be?



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Climate in your (mini) body

If you don't have room to make a life-sized body map, or tracing your body isn't for you, then try this activity instead.

Follow the instructions above about finding a quiet place and thinking about your body and emotions.

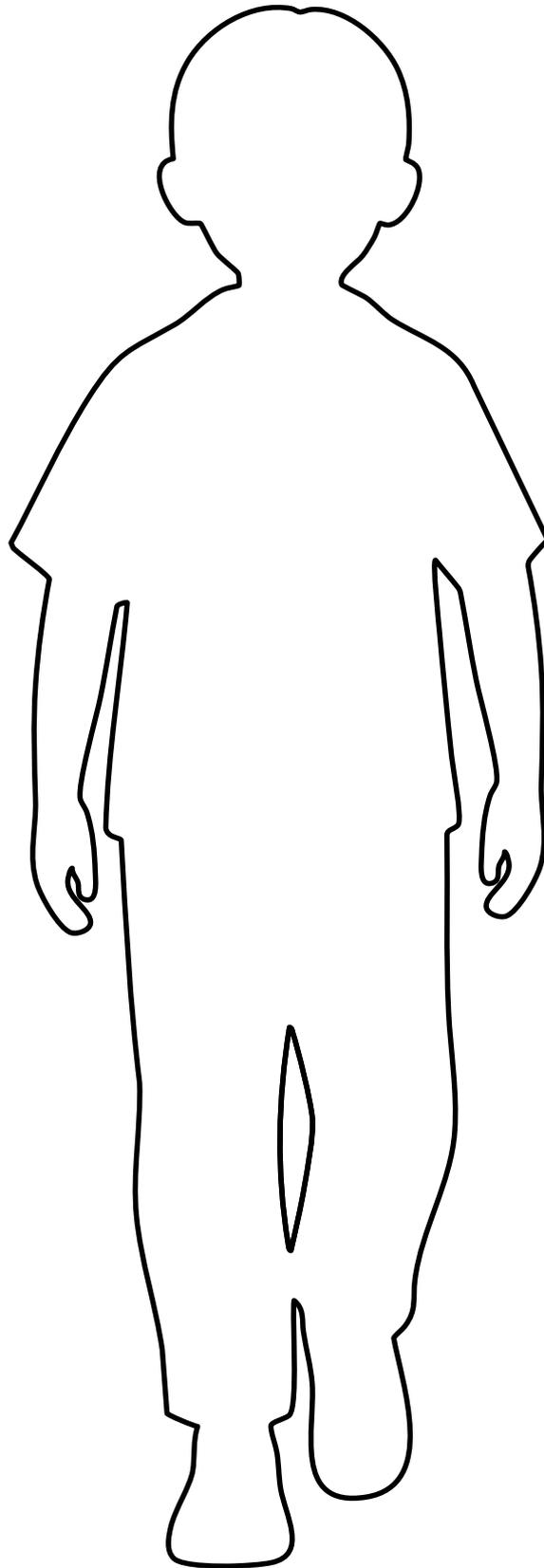
Once you've done this, use the space below to draw a silhouette of your body. Or, you can use the pre-drawn outline on the next page. Follow the instructions above about decorating your outline and make your mini body map.



HOT TIP

Bodies are great, they let us feel, act, think and do. Everyone's body is different and that's great too. If we were all the same, the world would be a boring place. As you draw your body think about the great things your body can do.







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Nature feels

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be a stone? Or a shell? A leaf? Or a seed?

Everything in nature has a story. Sometimes, those stories happen at very different time scales to human lives.

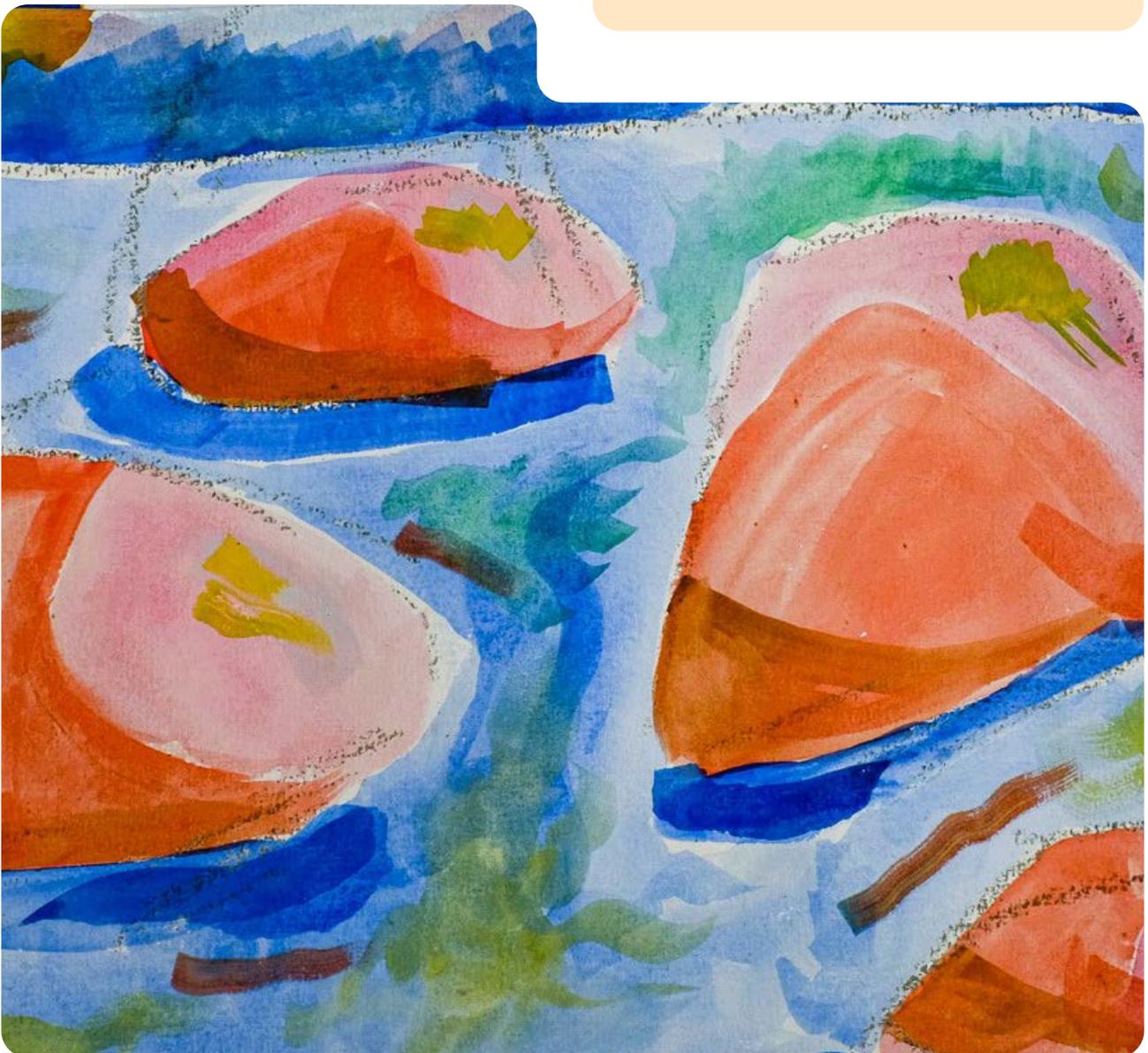
What would a stone think about climate change? Some stones have seen the climate change many times before. They would have been around during the last ice age, which ended 25,000 years ago.

How would a seed respond to fires, or floods? Some seeds need fire to grow! That's the case for many Australian plants, like the beautiful Banksias and Hakeas.

In this activity, you will start a conversation with an object you find in your local environment.

What you will need:

- Something to draw and write with (pens, pencils, crayons, marker pens, charcoal etc).





Let's get started!

Take a stroll in your garden, along your street, into a local park, or even around your home. You might like to do this with a friend or family member, or maybe your pet! Notice the different natural objects that you come across. Which one would you like to get to know better?

Choose one! If you decide to take it home, make sure you won't upset any living creatures when you do (don't take a stone if it is a habitat for ants or lizards, don't take a leaf if it is still growing on a plant).

Touch it, smell it, look very closely at its colours and lines and shadows and then draw what you notice about...



How it feels: Is it soft or hard? Is it spiky or smooth? Is it fragile or strong?



HOT TIP

You might like to challenge yourself to do these drawings to a time limit, like in the quick draw activity. Can you draw each of these responses in 1 minute?



How it smells: Is it fresh or earthy? Does it even have a smell?



**What it looks like: You could take a tracing of its shape.
You could notice all the edges and lines when you look at it from one angle.**



How it makes you feel.



**Do some research. What kind of thing is it? Where did it come from?
How did it end up where you found it?**





Now, imagine you are the object. What would it feel like to be that object?



How would the object feel about their home changing?



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Creating a digital story with stop motion

This activity helps you get in touch with your thoughts, feelings and concerns about climate change by constructing stories. Using stop motion techniques, you will be able to bring your ideas to life and share your stories in a fun creative way.

What you will need:

- Choose a smartphone or tablet. Download free stop motion animation software (e.g. Stop Motion Studio, iStopMotion) onto your phone. Search for examples on YouTube like this [short film](#). Download free stop motion animation software (e.g. [Stop Motion Studio](#), [iStopMotion](#)) from the Google or Apple Play Store onto your phone/tablet.
- Find a tripod or stable surface to hold the camera.
- Assemble various craft supplies (e.g. modelling clay, construction paper, markers, scissors, glue).





Let's get started!

This activity will take between 1 and 4 hours (depending on how long you make your story), so you might like to do it over a few sessions.

Begin by brainstorming and storyboarding: think about the aspects of climate change that concern

you the most, or the positive changes you would like to see.

Develop a story idea and create a simple storyboard using the guide below, outlining the key scenes and events.

1. Setting – Think about where to put your story. At the beach, in the forest, at home, in a city, outer space – anywhere you want.



2. Complication – Use your imagination to make something happen that creates a problem.



3. Resolve – Find a way to solve your problem.



4. End it – Find an ending to your story.



Create scenes using your craft supplies, using modelling clay, cut-out shapes, or your own drawings.



Capture individual movements of your craftwork into 20–50 frames. Have your characters make small movements and photograph each movement using the software.

Combine them to create movement to tell your story. Share your story with someone you love or who you think would find it interesting.

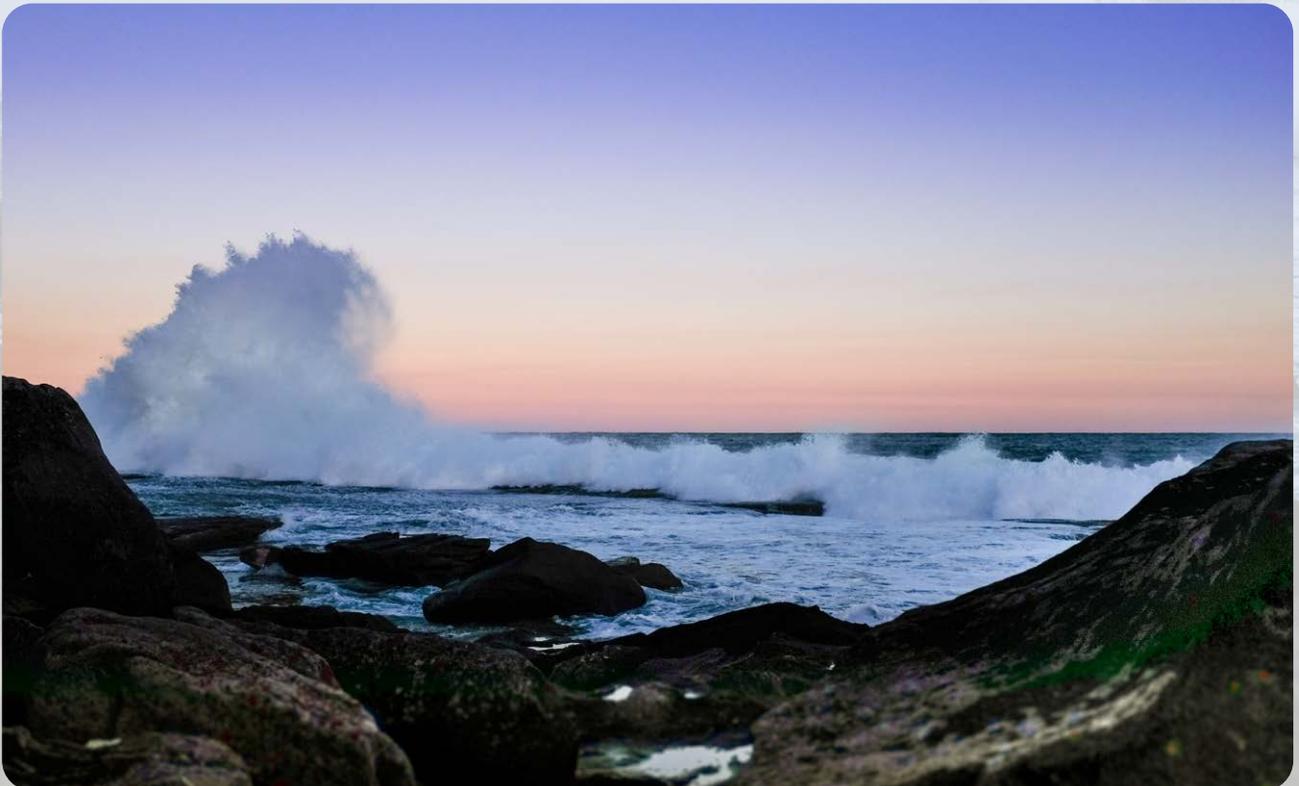
FUN FACT

Di worked with young people who felt anxious to make stop motion movies about their worries and what helps them through tough times. You can watch our story [here](#).





**How does it feel to create your own narrative and share your story?
Have you learned something new today?**





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Letter to a climate leader

Two words – thank you – can be very powerful. They let people know that you have noticed them and that you appreciate them. They also remind you about all the things you can be grateful for.

In this activity, you will say thank you to a leader who is taking action to protect people, places, and/or the planet from climate change. They might be your local Member of Parliament or Councillor – have they helped pass laws that stop big polluters, or that protect special ecosystems?

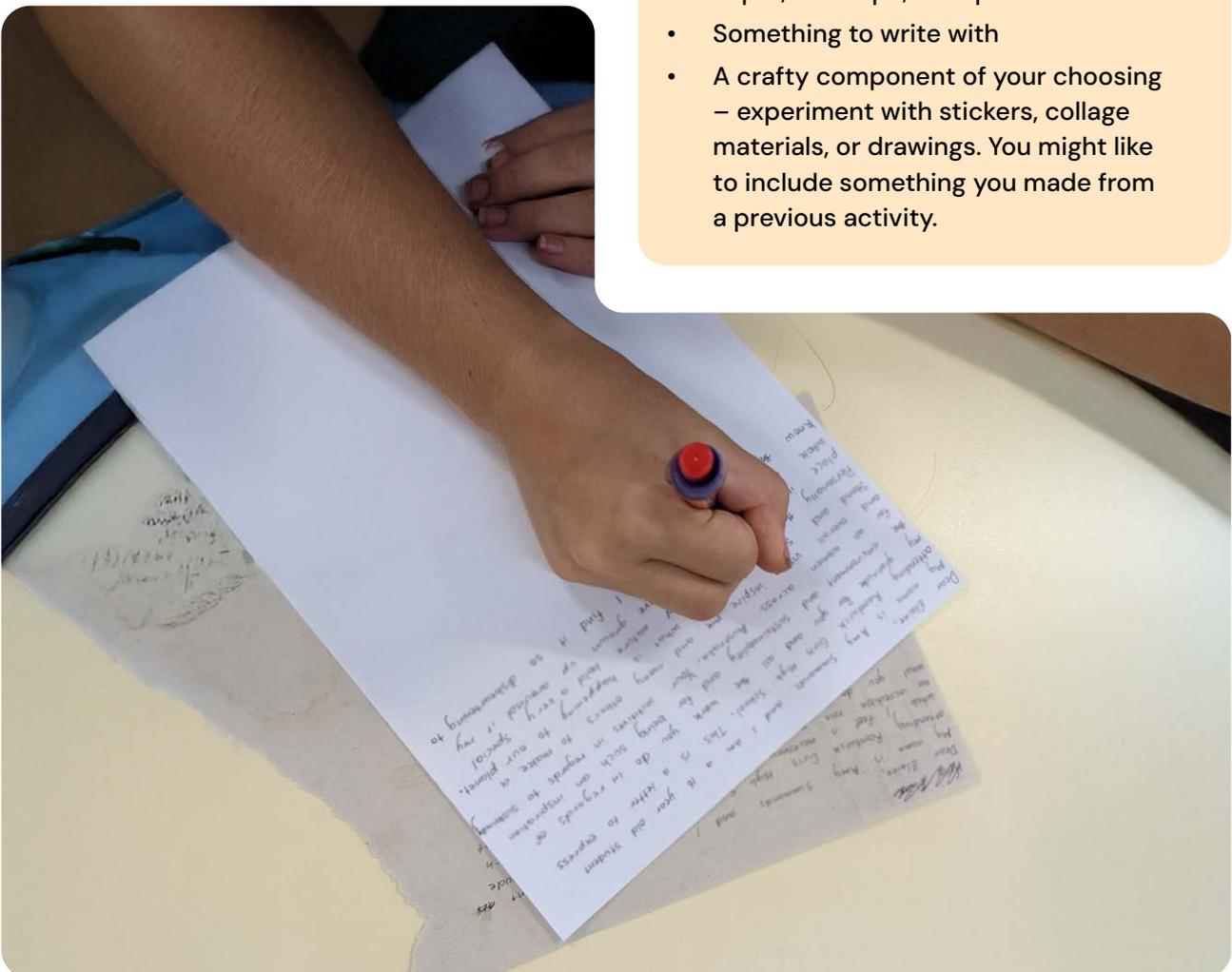
But this leader could be someone unexpected. They might not be working in government, or the head of a big company. They might not oversee lots of people. Sometimes, leaders can influence change without being “the boss”.

Just think of Greta Thunberg, the Swedish activist who founded the School Strike 4 Climate movement. She was only 15 when she stood alone outside the Swedish parliament to demand stronger climate action.

You might be able to think of someone even more unexpected who you could say thank you to. Is there someone in your school who is working hard to make it more sustainable? Is there a local business who makes climate action a priority?

What you will need:

- Access to books or the internet (optional, but could help with research)
- Paper, envelope, stamps
- Something to write with
- A crafty component of your choosing – experiment with stickers, collage materials, or drawings. You might like to include something you made from a previous activity.





Let's get started!



Take a few minutes to write a list of all the people you could say thank you to for their action on climate change.

Choose one person who you'd like to send a thank you letter to. You might like to do a bit of research to find out more about them. You can write some notes here:



**Who are they? What have they done that you want to acknowledge?
Will your letter be able to reach them?**

Create your letter

Find some special paper and an envelope that it will fit into. Start writing!

1. Tell them why you care about climate action.

Writing tip: Use details and description to explain how you feel about climate change. You might like to refer to some of the previous activities for inspiration.

2. Tell them why you are grateful to them – what has this person done or said that made you notice?

Writing tip: Be specific. Can you describe how you first learnt about their work? How does it make you feel?

3. You might like to add a question and your return address in case they are able to reply.

4. You might like to include an artwork as a small gift. It could be one of the drawings you made in a previous activity. Or you could do a new drawing or make a collage on the other side of your paper. You might like to decorate the envelope too!

5. Send your letter off.

Optional extra: Now that you've tried this yourself, could you invite your friends to write letters too? Maybe you could make one together for someone else who deserves recognition?





FUN FACT

Chloe and her friend Zoe have helped over 100 school students make letters of thanks for climate leaders. Some of the students sent a letter to the marine ecologist Professor Adriana Verges, who works to protect and replant algal forests and seagrass meadows in Australia. These ecosystems are important to help address climate change. For one, they are very good at storing carbon. Adriana got her letter on a day when she was feeling quite sad. Some of her seagrass plants had been damaged by floods. But when she got her letter, she felt even more motivated to keep doing her work.

How do you think the letter you have sent might make a difference to the person who receives it?



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More thanks

You've said thank you to a leader. But what about all the non-humans who help you every day, even if you don't notice them?

Go around your home and say thank you to every living being that you can find there. You could say thank you to the plants and trees for giving you clean air to breathe, or food to eat. You could say thank you to the house spiders for making sure there aren't too many flies and mosquitos.

Who else could you say thank you to? Go explore!



FUN FACT

The artist Mierle Ukeles once spent almost a year saying thank you to over 8500 employees of the New York Sanitation Department, who help take care of rubbish and recycling in the city. Saying thank you, and recording the stories of the workers she met, was her artwork. What stories could you record from the living beings you say thank you to in your home?

More thanks



How did that feel? Draw or write your answer:



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What's next?

Phew! You've made it to the end of the booklet. Take a moment and look back at everything you've done – look at the great art you've made, the big thinking you've done, and the feelings you've explored.

You've clearly got lots of skills and lots of interesting thoughts and feelings. What will you do with them next? Maybe you'd like to do something that helps to take care of the planet? Follow the steps below to start making a plan!



Step 1: list the things you care about.



Step 2: list the things you are good at or like doing.



Step 3: have a think about how you could use those skills/interests to help out with the things you care about. For example, if you care about trees, and you like being outside, maybe you could volunteer to plant some trees?

Other resources

For kids:

Curious Climate Schools

<https://curiousclimate.org.au/schools/>

Books on climate change for kids

<https://www.sir.advancedleadership.harvard.edu/articles/best-books-for-kids-on-climate-change>

For adults:

Parents for Climate

https://www.parentsforclimate.org/talking_with_kids_about_climate_change

Psychology for a Safe Climate

<https://www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/>

Don't forget!

If you'd like to share what you've made with our research team, please send us an email with your artworks, writing or anything else. Also feel free to get in touch if you have any questions.

Find us at creativeacts@blackdog.org.au



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