



Connectedness: wellbeing and literacy activities

Key Stage 2

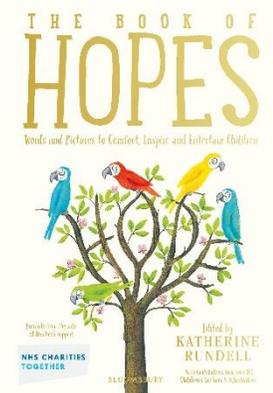
Introduction

After some time away from each other, humans often have a strong desire to reconnect. Although many of your pupils may have stayed digitally connected with each other, they may have missed being part of a bigger class, year group and whole school community. By exploring the theme of connectedness and community through these literacy activities you can help children to build coping mechanisms for when times are tough. You can use these teacher notes in partnership with the PowerPoint presentation or as inspiration to plan your own lessons.

The activities are linked to poems and stories from *The Book of Hopes* (published by Bloomsbury), which you can access at the National Literacy Trust Website: literacytrust.org.uk/bookofhopes.

Recovery Curriculum links

The activities in this resource link to the following Recovery Curriculum 'Levers' (Barry Carpenter, 2020) evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/#mentalhealth



Lever 1 Relationships: These activities will help your pupils rebuild relationships with their classmates, explore their own cultures and the cultures of their peers, and consider different ways we connect with different people in our lives.

Lever 2 Community: Creating a "community circle" will encourage children to understand and appreciate the support of their communities, both within school and outside of school. Acknowledging the significance of these communities will aid the transition from at-home to in-school learning.

Lever 5 Space: It's important to allow children time to work on their own creative activities that won't be assessed. Reflecting on their feelings as they are engaged in the task will provide a sense of space for children to find their voice, settle in to the school environment and encourage self-expression.



Connecting with each other – discussion

Start by having a discussion with your pupils about connectedness and why it's important. You can use the questions and comments below and in the PowerPoint to kick start the conversation.

Starter questions

What do we mean when we talk about “connecting” with someone?

Can anyone give an example of how they connect with a friend? How about a family member? Draw out some of the different ways they might connect with people they have different relationships with.

Why is connecting with each other important?

How did it feel during lockdown when you couldn't see your friends?

Did you find other ways of connecting with people when you couldn't see them? You could talk about the difference between connecting digitally and in person.

How does it feel to connect with each other now we are back at school? There are lots of positives to reconnecting with friends, but it's also okay to acknowledge that it might feel strange and why it can be hard.

Key points

After some time away from each other, humans really want to reconnect.

There are lots of ways to connect and we might have different ways of connecting to different people in our lives.

We can find ways of connecting with others even if we can't hug them or see them in person.

Coming back to school and seeing people we haven't seen in a long time might feel strange at first.

Sometimes the challenges we face feel really difficult, but we can reach out to others for support when we need it. We can also be a source of help and support for each other and make sure we reach out to someone else who is having a difficult time.

Remind the children that it's important to tell their teacher or another trusted adult if they are worried about how they are feeling, or about how they think someone they know may feel.



The Lamagaia Nest by Jasbinder Bilan

Read the story to your pupils. It's on page 80 of *The Book of Hopes*.

Discussion about the story

Discuss the children's reaction to the story. You can use the questions here and in the PowerPoint as starting points:

What was the story about?

Were there any parts of the story you particularly liked? Why?

Where is the story set?

How does the writer describe the landscape?

Are there any words you don't recognise? Any words from other languages? Can anyone translate or guess their meaning?

What do you think a lamagaia bird looks like? Are there clues in the text? You could ask children to draw one from their imagination before showing them a picture of a bearded vulture.

What is Asha's relationship with Nanijee like?

How can we tell that Nanijee and Asha are close and connected?

What does Nanijee mean when she says that she will always be with Asha?

Do the characters in the story remind you of anyone you know?

What do you think might happen next in the story?

The Lamagaia Nest is a short story, but you can learn more about the world and the characters in Jasbinder Bilan's book *Asha and the Spirit Bird*. There is also more to learn and do on Jasbinder's website: jasbinderbilan.co.uk/ashas-world.html



Bringing the story alive

Asha and Nanijee live in India, in the foothills of the Himalayas. This area might be familiar to some in your class and unfamiliar to others. Use the ideas below to explore the cultures of the Himalayas and allow the pupils to connect with each other's cultures and communities.

In the Himalayas, several different languages are spoken. Some children in your class might recognise the words below as being close to words in their own languages. Open the question out to class. If not, let the children guess using clues from the text.



Himalaya(s) – A large mountain range in Asia with over fifty mountains, including Mount Everest. The name 'Himalaya' comes from ancient Sanskrit, a language that isn't spoken anymore. Can any of your pupils guess what it means? 'Himá' (हिम) translates as 'snow' and 'ā-laya' (आलय) translates as 'abode' or 'dwelling'. This could mean that the mountains themselves live in the snow, or that it is a place where the people live in the snow.

Nanijee – grandmother

Ajwain – a seed-like fruit that tastes a bit like aniseed or caraway. Also known as carom.

Lamagaia – a bearded vulture

- How many words for 'grandmother' can your class think of, in their own languages and in other languages? Write them all up on the board.
- Do the children's families cook with anything similar to Ajwain at home? Use this to start a discussion around foods from their cultures - what do they eat at home? What about on special occasions? Talk about the similarities and differences. Your pupils could draw pictures of their favourite foods and label them. On another day you could ask each child to bring in a treat from home that is related to their culture to share with the class.
- Look up pictures of the bearded vulture, research its habitat, and folklore surrounding the bird. Do the children know of folklore, fairytales, or superstitions about birds from their own cultures or others? What is the significance of birds in various religions and stories?
- Can your children name any religions that are practiced in India? The most commonly practiced are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. Each have different practices, beliefs and cultures.
- The Himalayas are bordered by India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Bhutan and Nepal. Are there children in your class who have heritage in these countries or have visited? Extend your research into a class project: ask each group to research a different region, culture or religion of the people who live in the Himalayas. You could divide this up further by researching folklore, traditions and how the Himalayan people spend time and connect with their friends and families. Make sure that children with relevant cultures are included and valued, but that the burden of research and knowledge is shared equally.



The Gift of Time by Sita Brahmachari

Read the story to your pupils. It's on page 157 of *The Book of Hopes*.

Discussion about the story

Discuss the children's reaction to the story. You can use the questions here and in the PowerPoint as starting points.

What was the story about?

What characters were in the story?

Were there any moments that stood out to you?

What were the characters' relationships to each other?

How did young Sita feel at first about the little trips with her father and the visit to Iris's house? How can you tell? Did she feel the same on the drive home? What about at the end of the story?

What was Iris's life like? Are there clues in the text?

What does the title of the story mean?

Why was that story important to Sita and why does she remember it all these years later?

The title of the story might refer to the gift Dr. Brahmachari was able to give to Iris, of being there for her towards the end of her life. Or it might refer to the gift of time Dr. Brahmachari was giving to Sita, spending time with her and taking her with him on trips and house visits.

Even though young Sita might have been bored and Dr. Brahmachari might have been very busy, they gave Iris the gift of their time. They reached out and made a connection.

Connecting to those around us and giving them our time is a gift. It's important to connect with people we know well like Sita and her dad, but it can be very meaningful to connect with someone we don't know very well too.



My dear new friend

Your class can connect to people living in care homes who might be feeling lonely and worried during this time by writing letters to them. Check out literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/mydearnewfriend where there is a template and guidance on how to organise this.

Making community circles

When times are tough, it's important to remember that we are connected to a community around us, just like Sita, Iris and Dr. Brahmachari in the story. Talk to your pupils about what community means to them and what communities they are part of. You can make these colourful community circles to hang from a window or ceiling to remind them that they are not alone, even if they are going through a challenging time.

You will need

- Paper in lots of different colours
- Glue
- Pens
- String or ribbon
- Optional: other collage materials like stickers, feathers, sequins, scraps from magazines.



Step 1 – cut out your circles

Ask each child to select three different colours of paper and draw or trace 3 circles, one on each colour. The biggest should be about the same size as a plate; the next should be a bit smaller, about the size of a cereal bowl; and the smallest should be about the size of a cup. Cut out the circles and glue them onto the card, starting with the largest and ending with the smallest.

Step 2 – write all your communities

Ask the children to write their names at the very centre of the smallest circle, surrounded by their closest friends and family members: people they can reach out to for support when times are tough.

The medium sized circle is for the local communities they are part of, but where they don't necessarily know everyone. For example, the school community, a religious community, clubs or where they live.

The widest circle is for the national or global communities they are connected to, such as the Black community, Asian community, Deaf community, a wider religion or belief. This could also include an interest or hobby. Do they connect to communities through online gaming? Are they part of a community of K-pop fans? Do they belong to activism groups? Or do they support a football team? These are all different kinds of community.



Step 3 – decorate and display

Pupils can make their community circles extra colourful with stickers and sequins, then string them up from a window or ceiling in a lovely display. If possible, take time to share and appreciate the many different communities that your class is connected to. Remind the children that their class is also a community and that you will be there for each other when times are hard

Asking for help

Remind your pupils that connectedness works both ways. While it's important to reach out to our friends and family to support them, we can reach out for support ourselves if we need it too. Talk about why asking for help can be difficult. Think about how to facilitate a network of support and connectedness in your class.

- You could invent a code word or flag system for when someone is feeling sad and needs extra support from the class. They can put up the flag, or say the code word. This means that everyone should look out for that person: include them in games, ask if they are okay and be kind to them.
- You could have a buddy system or nominate class kindness champions whose job it is to make sure those in their group or bubble feel included and connected.
- Lots of schools have set up a “friendship bench” in the playground where you can sit if you haven't got someone to play with, and it's a cue for other children to invite you to join in. How can you recreate this gesture in line with your school's health and safety procedures?



Alone time

There might be times when we don't feel like connecting with others. Coming back into a large group might feel overwhelming for the children and they might need time to themselves. Reading for pleasure has been proven to benefit mental wellbeing and is a great independent activity. Think about how to safely set up a space where children can go and escape into a book or comic if they need some alone time.

