



Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2-3

Themes: The Environment | Activism | Inspirational Figures | Biographies

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INTRODUCING THE TOPIC!

***Extinction Planet* offers young readers a clear, insightful look at Earth's wildlife extinction crisis.**

It is estimated that out of around eight million species on Earth, at least one million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction, and that the current rate of extinction is up to 100 times higher than in any previous mass extinction. And it's human activity that's largely responsible for this frightening decline.

Answer the following questions in preparation for learning about the themes and ideas introduced in the book: *Extinction Planet*.

- What is 'extinction'? Can you think of any animals or plants that are already extinct?
- What do you think are some of the reasons a species might become extinct?
- What do you think the term 'mass extinction' means?
- Why is it more important to talk about extinction today than ever before?
- What challenges are currently facing the environment and the world's wildlife?

KEY TERMS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS

Before you read *Extinction Planet*, create a glossary of key vocabulary and environmental terms. Find a starter list below; add more words to your glossary as you read.

Adaptation; Biodiversity; Climate Change; Conservation; Ecosystem; Endangered; Evolution; Extinct; Extinction Rate; Fossil; Mass Extinction; Population; Species; Wildlife Reserve.

CHALLENGE!

CMillions of living things live in our world, but for every species, there are hundreds more that no longer exist. Identify the animal or plant on pages 4–5 that died out or became extinct during the time-period listed:

393 million years ago
 300 million years ago
 25 million years ago
 350 years ago



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PEEK INSIDE: CASE STUDY – THE RED LIST

Read pages 26–27 in which we learn about how we can save species from extinction by monitoring them. This means keeping track of how many of each species are left so that we can identify which are endangered and how we can help them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important to keep track or count how many of each species are left?
2. What is the IUCN? What does it do?
3. Why is it easier to count plants than animals?
4. What is a 'camera trap'?
5. What is the IUCN Red List?
6. What does the conservation status 'CR' mean? What about 'LC'?
7. How many species does the IUCN list as 'Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered'?
8. What might cause the status of a species to become less endangered over time?

CHALLENGE!

Choose one of the 'Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered' creatures listed on the IUCN Red List. Create a campaign plan to save your chosen creature. A good campaign plan might include a list of goals or objectives, a short tagline, an outline of the problem and solutions, and any supporting persuasive materials such as posters, social media posts, television adverts or speeches.



REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

- Create a visual timeline of mass extinctions, beginning with the 'K-T extinction' of dinosaurs 66 million years ago. What caused each mass extinction, and which species were lost?
- 'If one species in an ecosystem dies out, it affects the other species too.' Explain this statement using the following terms: adaptation, biodiversity, ecosystem, and food web.
- Often, when a species dies out, it's because of a combination of different threats. Use pages 22–23 to define each of the threats: habitat loss; collecting, hunting and poaching; overexploitation; non-native species; pollution; war; and climate change.
- Make a list of the ways that humans have contributed to the current 'extinction crisis'. Write a Prevention Plan for future generations so they can learn from the mistakes of others before them.
- Read pages 38–39 to learn more about Wolong National Nature Reserve in China. What is it famous for? How does it protect giant pandas and other species? Using the Wolong Nature Reserve as inspiration, create a plan and design for a new wildlife reserve in a location of your choice. Give reasons for your decisions.
- Use the tips on page 31 for creating green spaces in towns and cities. Write a letter to your headteacher giving suggestions for how to help the wildlife thrive in and around your school grounds.
- After reading the book, give reasons to have hope for the future. Which positive things are happening to help protect our wildlife? How are people's attitudes changing and why?



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