Living with darkness

Suggested age: 6 to 9
Project 3

Living with darkness

Summary

This project explores what it’s like to live without access to reliable forms of electricity through case studies and first hand experience.

Outcomes

• Through individual and group activities students gain new knowledge about what it’s like to live without access to electricity.
• Students will engage observational, critical thinking and problem solving skills to explore this topic.

Suggested age range: 6 to 9 years

Subjects Covered: Science, Technology, Environment, Citizenship

Materials: Hand-outs, Food such as bread and jam or a dress-up box

Time required: Preparation: 5 minutes
Teaching: 40 minutes

Preparation:

• Read through the program.
• Prepare materials.
• Print or make the darkness & daylight worksheet

Introduction

1.1 billion people live without access to electricity. This has dramatic effects on their lives and livelihoods.
Feel

Experience what it’s like doing simple tasks in the dark like making a sandwich, tying your shoelaces and getting dressed or simply form a circle and lay on the ground.

Ask:

It’s dark, what can you see? Can you see colors? Can you hear sounds? How does it feel? Ask the students when they have experienced darkness before. When is it normally dark? At night? How do we see at night?

Alternate activity 1
Using blindfolds. . .
Begin the class by pairing up the students and ask one of each pair to wear a blindfold. Ask the students to stand at one end of the room and to move with their partner guiding them across the room.

Ask:

How does it feel?
Then ask the students to swap roles and to do the exercise again.
When have you experienced darkness before?
When is it normally dark? At night?
How do we see at night?

Alternate activity 2
Another variation is to ask one student to wear a blindfold, then have the other students form a large circle around them. Each student in turn can then call the name of the blindfolded student in the middle, who then tries to walk towards the person who is calling to them.

Ask:

How does it feel?
When have you have experienced darkness before?
When is it normally dark? At night?
How do we see at night?
Encourage your students to discuss what they normally do at night and which of those things are only possible with electricity. Each student should then draw one of these activities and add it to the darkness and daylight sheet.
See Project 2: Darkness & Solar Light

What it feels like to experience darkness.
What things people do in the day that they can’t do in the night without light or electricity.
Extension at home

Ask students to go home and spend one evening or even one hour living without access to electricity, with their family they might cook or eat in the dark. Ask them to fill out the below form listing the activities they would normally do at home but couldn’t without electricity.

**Experiencing what it’s like to live with darkness**

1.1 billion people live without access to reliable forms of electricity. For one night or even one hour, experience what it’s like to live without electricity. On the left side write down what you would usually do in the evening and on the right side what you did instead.

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**Follow up discussion**

*What was it like to live without electricity for one night?*

*What couldn’t you do and what did you do instead?*

Use the ‘darkness experience’ sheets to start a conversation about this.
Case studies

Case studies, handout and discuss.

This is Octavia Ndebele from Johannesburg, South Africa. One of her jobs is selling Little Suns.

“I’m a pretty busy person: I’m a teacher’s assistant, a child-minder plus I’ve been selling Little Suns lamps for a year now. I sell mostly to the Zimbabwean people who live in Johannesburg. I also sell them to people I know and other child-minders like me.

I’m excited about selling the lamps because they help me save for my driver’s license test that I am going to take in a couple of weeks.”

The student Swafdal Abdellah, goes to boarding school in Uganda.

“At night, the power gets switched off here so it’s very dark. If it wasn’t for my Little Sun, I wouldn’t be able to get my homework done!”
Case studies

Case studies, handout and discuss.

15 year old Reshma takes care of her family’s house and garden during the day.

“When it gets dark at night and my parents come back from work, I turn on my Little Sun lamp so we can all make dinner together.”

This mother is supporting her daughter Husenama in many ways.

“My daughter has a disability and is both physically and mentally challenged. We don’t have a toilet in our home and need to go outside into the fields. A Little Sun lamp helps Husenama and I go to the toilet when it is dark outside.”
Case studies

Case studies, handout and discuss.

Nyanlok is one of the beneficiaries of Oxfam’s WASH non-food items and female dignity kits distribution in Nyal. Oxfam’s Kenyi Alison Athanasius conducted an interview with her to see how she felt about the solar lamp she was given:

“The most important item I have received in this distribution is the solar light because I have a small child who needs to be taken care of in the night... This island is full of snakes which usually come out from the swamp at night to avoid getting cold, so this solar lamp will help me see at night to avoid being attacked... We Nuer people also like cooking when it starts getting dark, this solar light will help me cook clean food for my children.”