



Lessons from Nature Briefing

This brief introduction uses short videos from a variety of sources to provide an overall flavour of Lessons from Nature and the thinking behind it. Special thanks to Cris Edgill and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in helping develop this.

We suggest you watch and read in this order. Start with Part 1 and select items from part 2 as required. Part 3 is only if you wish to explore more.

PART 1 – Introduction to Lessons from Nature (a.k.a the Circular Economy, The Blue Economy, the Closed-Loop Economy, Cradle-to-Cradle thinking)

Part 1 of the briefing brings together thinking from a number of different sources which all explain Lessons from Nature. The terms may differ, but the principles remain the same.

The Simple Show explains the Blue Economy - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1af08PSlals>. This is a 3 minute cartoon that brings out the difference between the sustainability approach and the Circular Economy approach.

Watch the video Re-thinking Progress: The Circular Economy by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCRKvDyyHml> (4 minutes). The video explores how through a change in perspective we can re-design the way our economy works - designing products that can be 'made to be made again' and powering the system with renewable energy. It questions whether with creativity and innovation we can build a restorative economy. Note some key points (a) waste = food and (b) the need to use renewable energy (living within current solar income is another way of putting it) and (c) the necessity to re-think the operating system rather than trying to improve the old one. How can we move from the current linear model of production which is based on “take – make – dump” and create an economy more like a complex living system?

Thinking assignment: what are the obstacles to moving in this direction?

Revision (if needed) – watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jORau0V62c> (6 minutes). Note the three principles here called (a) all materials in continuous cycles, (b) renewable energy only and (c) celebrating diversity. This leads onto Cradle2Cradle design. The video contrasts the sustainability strategy with the Cradle2Cradle strategy.

PART 2 – some businesses that are basing their development on these principles

Part 2 shows examples of how the principles are being put into action.

Interface Flor – (6 minutes video) watch

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPQ9x_Y2of4&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Nike – a company in transition towards closed-loop (still thinking a bit about sustainability...)

<http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/videos?video=Business%20Case%20Study%202:%20Nike>
(6 minute)

An example of closing the loop from an NGO from Brazil working in Haiti (2 minutes)

<http://www.reuters.com/news/video?videoChannel=2602&videoId=60852403>.



After the video read a short article (8 minutes) on how this idea could be used in UK on <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8501236.stm>

Reflect on: would this information / video inspire your students to set up a research project? How could you connect this to your curriculum?

PART 3 – deepening your understanding of the Circular Economy (if you have time)

Part 3 is for those that want to explore more, or perhaps refer back to later as new questions emerge.

Read some of the articles on www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org . We suggest you start with <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/about/circular-economy/good-rather-than-less-bad-the-circular-approach> which is Chapter I (3 minutes). Then work through Chapters II to VI (another 20 minutes).

Revision – Ellen MacArthur’s take on Holland <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/videos>

Take a look at the Blue Economy website <http://www.blueeconomy.eu/>. They are working with companies applying the closed loop economy in practice.

Lessons from Nature is about changing the operating system. Read through this article by Donella Meadows on Leverage Points. Note that real change comes when we change the rules of the system (the closed loop economy approach); self-organisation happens so that systems change themselves into new systems (evolution in biological terms); and we change the goals of the system (the values that drive it).

http://www.collectivedynamics.org/SDES_Course_Site/Readings_files/Donella%20Meadows_Leverage_Points.pdf