

Tutorial 3 :

Crafting Compelling Climate Narratives



Co-funded by
the European Union



1. Aim / Learning Objectives

The aim of this tutorial is to equip educators and youth workers with the essential knowledge and tools to write and develop interactive adventure books centred around climate change. The themes concerning the climate are varied and increasingly recognised by young people, who are often anxious about these issues, but also the protagonists of global movements advocating for more sustainable policies.

The idea, therefore, to reflect both their anxieties and their activism within the stories in order to motivate, inform and engage young readers in a positive way.

Every story will carry the important mission of helping learners develop their skills in a creative and flexible way, fostering critical thinking and non-traditional reasoning, and allowing them to strategically strengthen their educational and professional growth.

Key Learning Objectives:

- Structure climate change stories using key narrative elements (hero, conflict, resolution).
- Integrate real case studies into the stories.
- Use stories as a tool to stimulate critical thinking, problem-solving and active participation.

2. Introduction

Stories on climate change narrate events, experiences or scenarios related to the environment, often through personal or collective points of view. They combine scientific facts with emotions, values and actions, making the content more accessible and engaging.

In this sense, narrative becomes a powerful tool for linking climate issues to human experience: it transforms abstract problems such as global warming, extreme events or environmental injustice into concrete situations where characters face real challenges. This connection not only informs but also motivates readers to reflect and act.

The climate itself can thus become a protagonist of the story, shaping settings, influencing characters' lives and driving conflicts that require resolution. Through stories, learners can experience both the urgency of the problem and the possibility of change.

3. Step-by-Step Guide

a) Structuring an effective climate narrative

Step 1 – Define the foundation

Before starting to write, it is necessary to identify the core elements of the story:

- **Where** the narrative takes place.
- **When** it happens (past, present, or future).
- **What** is happening (the background or main theme).
- **Who** the characters are.

Step 2 – Visualise the structure

Try to visualise your story graphically: for example, by creating three circles representing the beginning, the middle, and the end. Insert into each circle settings, characters, timeframe, as well as any historical references, news items, or specific facts that caught your attention.

Step 3 – Write a linear version

Before branching the story into different options and alternatives, write a full linear version first, already identifying the points where choices or changes of direction can later be inserted.

Step 4 – Focus on problem-solving


The entire narrative should be oriented toward problem-solving, showing how the characters confront and overcome challenges. Key turning points and the ending should aim to inspire hope and motivate readers to act, both within the story and in real life.

Step 5 – Craft the incipit

The beginning of the story is crucial, it represents a pact between author and reader. From the very first lines, it must stimulate curiosity and interest. The opening may be dynamic, descriptive, polemical, or even “meteorological”, as long as it avoids clichés and clearly introduces the climate issue at the heart of the story.

Step 6 – Build engaging scenes

Write scenes that are emotionally rich and sometimes tension-filled. Alternate action-



driven sequences with reflective moments, inviting readers to think deeply about the climate issue. Use vivid descriptions that trigger inner reactions and meaningful choices.

Step 7 – Add branching options

Once the complete story is written, go back to the points where you planned to insert multiple-choice options and develop alternatives. Imagine scenarios that shift the direction of the narrative, showing how wrong decisions can lead to catastrophic or unhappy outcomes. Graphically, you can picture it as a tree: each choice leads to new branches and different scenarios.

Step 8 – Experiment with approaches

To strengthen the structure, experiment with different writing techniques, for example, reverse planning, starting from the final solution and constructing the story backwards.

Step 9 – Situate the story clearly


It is essential to define not only the theme, the climate event, and the issue to be addressed, but also the time period and the locations, whether fixed or multiple. The goal is to provide readers with meaningful elements that help situate the story.

Step 10 – Connect environment and narrative

Remember that the environment, understood not only as a physical place but also as a mental space, can influence people positively or negatively. Climate change itself becomes an “environment” shaping the characters’ lives. Thus, the chosen theme is both the problem to be addressed and the backdrop against which the story unfolds.

Step 11 – Ensure inclusivity

Descriptions must be engaging and informative, enabling readers to make their own choices. These are “special” books: beyond entertainment, they must also offer opportunities for reflection and decision-making. Characters should represent a wide range of experiences, avoiding stereotypes. The protagonist should not always be a white male, different genders, backgrounds, abilities, and minority groups should be included, in order to create stories that are as inclusive as possible.



b) Choosing the voice of the story

Among the most important choices to make is that of the story's point of view, which will be fundamental. Who will be the narrator? The narrator is, in every respect, the "witness" of the story.

Choosing the first person can, for a beginner writer, simplify the writing process. It creates intimacy, spontaneous tone and allows better control over the protagonist's emotional development and growth. However, it will also be necessary to attempt to portray characters very different from oneself, always keeping in mind the setting and context in which everything takes place, so that the adventure can unfold and progress toward the resolution of events.

Another possibility is to use a third-person narrator, who recounts the experiences of all the characters, describing both their physical and psychological traits, and providing as much information as possible. Even though external, this narrator may still adopt the protagonist's perspective, describing how this character faces and experiences the trials they must overcome. In this case, too, the reader can easily identify with the character.

A further variant is the use of the second person, where the narrator speaks directly to the reader. This creates originality and immediacy but is more complex to manage, especially for beginners.

c) Integrating real events and figures

Our daily lives are full of events, often dramatic, caused by climate change: sudden torrential rains, the melting of glaciers leading to rising sea levels, desertification, and the destruction or erosion of land. Real-life environmental events such as these can serve as powerful narrative triggers. By taking inspiration from what we read in the news and imagining it as the central point of our story, we can use it to create the setting and to determine which and how many characters will be involved: protagonists, antagonists, and supporting roles.

The “catastrophic” theme thus chosen should serve as the foundation for a story that not only warns and raises awareness but also offers examples, inspiration, and possibilities for renewal, thanks to the multiple solutions that the adventure book structure allows. These climate-related conflicts become opportunities to imagine creative responses and new pathways for change.

Use real stories as inspiration to construct realistic and motivating narratives. For example:

- The reforestation movement in Kenya (Green Belt Movement)
- Inspirational figures such as Rachel Carson, Julia Butterfly Hill - who famously lived in a redwood tree to prevent the destruction of a forest - or Jacques Cousteau, the marine explorer and passionate advocate for nature, can provide models for protagonists or be woven directly into the storyline.

Feel free to identify historical or real-life figures as sources of inspiration, even if only to shape the traits of their own fictional characters. What is important is the point of view you decide to give to the book, using the first or second person, to allow the reader to identify and empathise with the protagonists.

4. Practical Activity Example

Writing requires research; therefore, it is necessary to gather all the information needed to build a solid foundation for the narrative. Inspiration may then be drawn from literature, rich in examples and books of different genres (fantasy, science fiction, true stories, graphic novels) where climate or climate change plays a central role.

Some examples include:

- “The Call of the Wild” by J. London, set in the wilderness with a harsh and inhospitable climate, following the adventures of the dog Buck.
- The true story of Christopher McCandless, “Into the Wild”, recounting his tragic journey in Alaska. Both books treat climate as a protagonist rather than a mere backdrop.

Among recent publications is the graphic novel “The Fish Girl” by S. Jessen, which tells the story of two children trapped in their home at the mercy of rising waters caused by heavy rains. Also noteworthy are the award-winning “Stardust” by Hannah Arnessen, and “Il limite del mondo” by Barbara Borlini (in collaboration with Francesco Memo), a unique graphic novel, or rather, a “double-faced” book with two covers and two autonomous yet interconnected stories, addressing the theme of climate change. In a future only seemingly dystopian, but in fact very close, it depicts the lives of two young people living in different parts of the world: on one side a temperate and wealthy region, on the other a scorching and impoverished one, forced to endure the harshest effects of climate change.

All these books (and many others) can serve as valuable examples of how the theme of climate can be treated and embedded within a compelling narrative.

5. Inclusivity Considerations

- Linear writing, with short paragraphs and use of bold for key words (Line spacing 1.5; text aligned to the left; do not use italics, underlining and capitals; put text in bold and/or colour to highlight it)
- Avoid inaccessible cultural symbolism or stereotypes.
- Visual aids.
- Give preference to concrete language, avoiding abstract concepts or complex metaphors.

6. Expected Outcomes/ Conclusion

Educators and youth workers will be able to:

- Write/design climate stories that stimulate participation and empathy;
- Use heroic and realistic structure to construct engaging stories;
- Teach young people how to address environmental challenges through storytelling.

7. Recommended Tools

- Genially - interactive narratives
- Audacity - for audio
- <https://www.climatestorylab.org/>
- <https://climatevisuals.org/>

8. Bibliography

MacDonald, A., & Moffat, K. (2024). *Creative approaches to climate adaptation education in secondary schools: Learning from the "Suitcase Stories" project*. *The Curriculum Journal*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237241236191>

Lejano, R. P., Tavares-Reager, J., & Berkes, F. (2018). *Climate and Narrative: Environmental Knowledge in Everyday Life*. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1462901113000373>

NPR. (2024, March 29). Panama's Guna people are moving to escape rising seas. <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/29/1241687295>

Beach, R. (2023). Addressing the challenges of preparing teachers to teach about the climate crisis. *The Teacher Educator*, 58(4), 507-522.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2023.2175401>

Climate Narratives: What is Modern about Traditional Ecological Knowledge? 1 Raul P. Lejano, Joana Tavares, and Fikret Berkes
<https://socialecology.uci.edu/sites/socialecology.uci.edu/files/users/pdevoe/climatenaarratives.pdf?>

Greenbelt Movement. (n.d.). *Greenbelt Movement*. Retrieved July 15, 2025, from <https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>

Good Energy Stories. (n.d.). *What is a climate lens?* Retrieved July 15, 2025, from <https://www.goodenergystories.com/playbook/what-is-a-climate-lens>



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. However, the views or opinions expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the European Union or the Agency of Youth Affairs. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Project code: 2024-2-LT02-KA220-YOU-000293123



All content is under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

