



## Activity 1 – Write an essay about an issue affecting British woods

Write an expository/‘for and against’ essay debating an environmental issue impacting British woodlands.

Use this English activity to fulfil the **Share your woodland words and images** challenge.

[woodlandtrust.org.uk/support-us/act/your-school/green-tree-a-award/woodland-words-and-images/](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/support-us/act/your-school/green-tree-a-award/woodland-words-and-images/)

Worth two points on the award.



### Curriculum requirements KS3

Students should be taught to:

- write for a range of audiences accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for both pleasure and to provide information. For example, they should be taught to write well-structured formal expository and narrative essays as well as a range of other narrative and non-narrative texts, including arguments and personal and formal letters
- plan, draft, edit and proof-read their essays, considering how their writing reflects the audiences and purposes for which it was intended.

### Learning outcomes

After completing this activity, students will have:

- produced an expository essay or a ‘for and against’ essay debating an environmental issue affecting British woods
- carried out an investigation on an environmental issue, gathering key points and information on why that issue is harmful to the environment, for example the impacts of climate change, the national HS2 train line, or the destruction of British woods, forests and trees through urbanisation, farming or other causes
- done further research and gathered evidence on their chosen environmental issue to show the impact on British woodland,



considering if there are other factors that may have a more significant impact

- used the evidence from their investigations to set forth a line of argument concerning that issue to construct their essay
- written a conclusion which clearly expresses their individual opinion on the issue discussed.

### Preparation and resources

The following materials will help you deliver this activity successfully.

#### Outdoors – in a local woodland, park or your school grounds

- risk assessments
- health and safety equipment
- outdoor clothing and footwear suitable for all weathers

#### In the classroom

AV equipment to show the film 'What is ancient woodland?'

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/ancient-woodland/](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/ancient-woodland/)

- prior to writing the essay, students will need time to research their chosen environmental issue that impacts British woodlands
- sentence starters and British woodland facts (provided below)
- devices with internet access for students to carry out their research
- writing equipment, for example notebooks and pens

### Location



#### On a woodland visit

If possible, go to a local woodland before the lesson so students can explore. Discuss why British trees and woods are valuable.



#### In your school grounds or a local park

Alternatively, go into your school grounds or a local park with trees before or as part of your lesson. Sit underneath some trees and discuss why British trees and woods are valuable.



#### In the classroom

All parts of this activity can be completed in class.



## **Starter activity (10 minutes)**

### **Watch our video: What is ancient woodland?**

Watch the film then discuss these two questions in pairs and feed back to the whole class:

- How is a British woodland valuable for wildlife?
- How is a British woodland valuable for people?

## **Main activity (40 minutes)**

Students should produce their essays. The essay should include an introduction, main body and a clear conclusion. The introduction should have a topic sentence and include the main points of the environmental issue they are going to discuss and debate.

The body of the essay is the debate and should contain at least three detailed and developed paragraphs. For example, two paragraphs to support and two paragraphs to argue against.

Finally, the conclusion should clearly state their overall opinion and express their emotions towards the subject.

## **Plenary/evaluation (10 minutes)**

To end the lesson, ask students to describe why British woods are valuable for people and wildlife. Allow them to share with the class one environmental issue that impacts British trees and woods and express their opinion on it.

## **Extension**

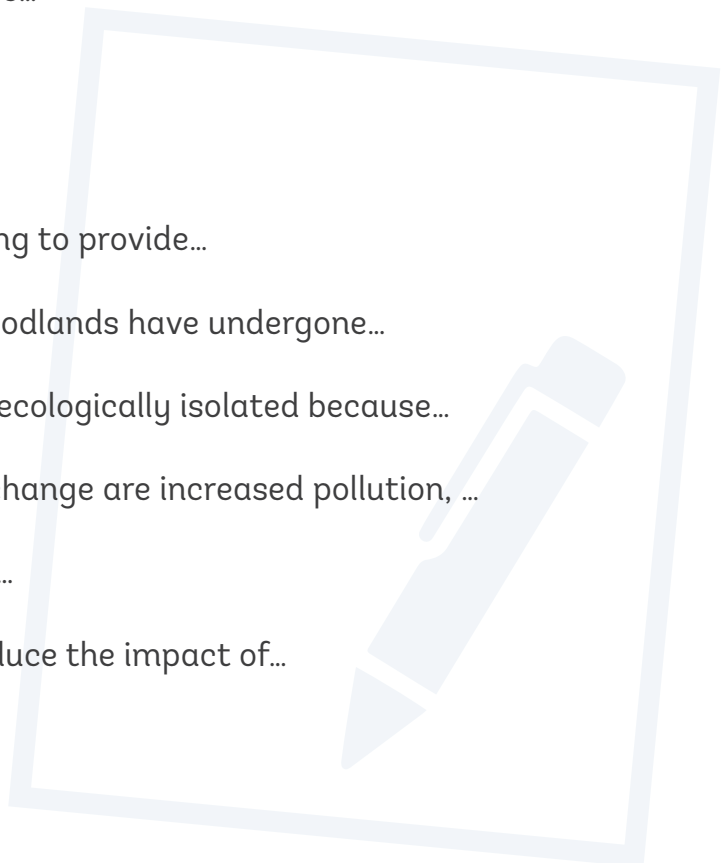
Students can further develop their English skills by proof-reading and editing another student's essay. This will allow students to consider how their peer's writing reflects on them as the target audience.



Provide students with copies of the sentence starters and woodland facts below to help them form their essays.

### Sentence starters

1. Climate change in the world can be caused by...
2. During the past century, human activities have...
3. Global warming has severely impacted...
4. Due to the rapid development of the economy and technology, there has been a demand for infrastructure. This has affected the environment by...
5. Arguments for and against the HS2 are based on...
6. The government believes that the development of infrastructure is advantageous because...
7. One of the most important benefits of \_\_\_\_\_ is...
8. The most affected areas are...
9. Opponents claim that...
10. It has been argued that...
11. The government is proposing to provide...
12. Over the last \_\_Britain's woodlands have undergone...
13. Woods have become more ecologically isolated because...
14. Factors driving ecological change are increased pollution, ...
15. Progress has been made in...
16. Action is being taken to reduce the impact of...





## Woodland facts

1.

**Woods and forests are cities for our wildlife.** Our woods and trees are home to more wildlife than any other landscape. The UK's woodland has some of our richest habitats, providing homes for thousands of species including many of our mammals, birds, reptiles, and invertebrates.

2.

**Woods in the UK are structured with four layers: canopy, understorey, herb layer and ground layer.** The canopy is made up of the leaves and branches of the tallest trees. The understorey or shrub layer is the vegetation below the canopy from smaller trees or shrubs, such as hawthorn, that grow in low light. The herb (or field) layer comes next. Plants that grow here depend on how open the canopy is - many need gaps of light to grow. The ground layer is the forest floor filled with mosses, fungi, leaf litter and decaying wood.

3.

**Only around 13% of the UK is covered in woods and forests.** The UK is the second least wooded country in Europe after Ireland. Europe's average tree cover is 44%. Not enough trees are being planted in the UK, meaning we could soon be in a period of deforestation.

4.

**Just 2% of the UK's land mass is covered in ancient woodland.** Ancient woodland is defined as areas that have been continuously wooded since 1600 in England and Wales, and 1750 in Scotland. It is not the trees but the soils that make them ancient. The soils have been preserved from human interference for centuries. This has resulted in the development of complex ecosystems that make ancient woods unique and irreplaceable.

5.

**Spending time in woods and forests, or even just around trees, is proven to boost our health and wellbeing.** Lots of research provides evidence that woods benefit our health. Studies have shown that patients with views of trees out their windows heal faster and with fewer complications. Children with ADHD show fewer symptoms when they have access to nature. Being near



trees helps our concentration by reducing mental fatigue. One study discovered that a forest stroll had beneficial effects on blood pressure, heart rate and the immune system.

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- 6. Most of the increase in global temperatures since 1950 has been caused by human activity.**

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- 7. Global temperatures have increased by about 1° Celsius in the past century.**

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- 8. As global temperatures increase, our societies will find it harder to adapt to the changes this brings, and some species are more likely to go extinct.**

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- 9. The HS2 railway will be 351 miles of new track linking London to Birmingham and Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds.**

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- 10. HS2 will pass through or adversely impact over 130 protected wildlife sites, including 10 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and over 50 ancient woodlands, many over 400 years old.**

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