

1 How many people?

Introduction

At the end of October 2011 the world reached the landmark of having 7 billion people. This activity uses this historic moment and our still growing population, as the basis for a thoughtful learning opportunity.



Key Stage: 2

Time: 60 mins

Learning Style: teacher-led
(+ group learning)

Why should we think about this ?

There are many challenges facing our world and many tensions between people in their local communities and nationally. Amidst the causes of these challenges and tensions, our growing population is often given as a key issue.

It is important for learners to think about this for themselves (as opposed to the propaganda that can be found on both sides) and come to their own conclusions about the significance or otherwise of how many people we share our world with.

When should we think about this ?

This activity has clear foundations in the area of numeracy and handling data, but the numbers of people in different communities quickly touches on other subject areas and ideas, so this activity should not be used just for its mathematical potential.

It could be used to connect to learning about place for example, or about issues such as food, water, deforestation, resources etc. It has obvious links to geography and citizenship and could also be connected to work around school linking (comparing population in two areas) or as the basis of an off-timetable topic.

2 How many people?

Learning Activities

➔ What do I think about... POPULATION?

my class...

my school...

my town...

(my county...)

my country...

the world...

Put learners into small groups and ask each group to estimate responses to the above and write up each group's guesses. Then ask the class to help you calculate a class guess by calculating the mean average (years 5 and 6) of the different estimates.

➔ How can I develop my thinking ?

National population of the UK: 62,698,362 (July 2011 est.)

World population: 6,928,198,253 (July 2011 est.)

Obviously, there are official answers to the guesses your learners have made, but even these will vary in how precise they are and many are only best estimates. You may like to share answers (including those above) with your class at this stage.

This sharing can be interesting and useful in itself, helping learners to better understand big numbers. You might like to explore why big numbers are often estimates. The picture book *'How big is a million?'* is a great literacy link to support learners in understanding big numbers.

Learning how many people there are is one thing, but the real purpose of the activity is to take thinking further and ask questions such as:

“What does this mean?”

“How does it affect me?”

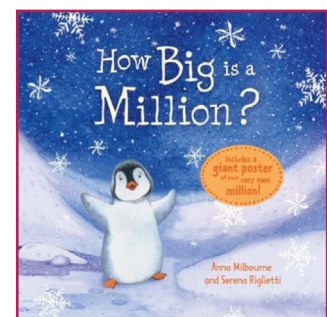
To help with this you could consider the statements that the United Nations (UN) made in October 2011:

7 billion is an **opportunity**

7 billion is a **challenge**

7 billion is a **call to action**

Ask learners to discuss in their groups, or perhaps as a whole class, why these statements have been made and what they think of them. You may need to explain briefly what the UN is.



As teachers we need to learn how to be the facilitator, devil's advocate and challenger to learning rather than the instructor. For advice on developing these skills see the **Time 2 Think** CPD materials **Facilitator Skills** and **Critical Thinking** as support to this activity.

3 How many people?

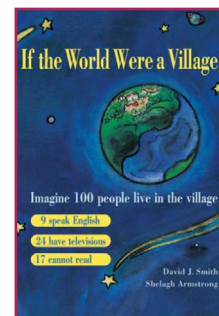
Years 3 and 4 may need to focus only on the words ‘opportunity’ and ‘challenge’ using dictionary support, and may need extra sentences to rephrase this complex metaphor, such as ‘Because there are so many people in the world we have opportunities to...’ or “7 billion people means the world faces many challenges...” Older learners can explore ‘call to action’ with teacher support.

Things that might come up include:

- too many people
- more people to do things
- not enough food
- where will everyone live?
- when will the population stop growing? Does it matter?

The picture book *‘If the World Were a Village’*, also mentioned in the Time 2 Think activity *Shaping the Future Together*, could be helpful in stimulating some deeper thinking about these statements.

Older learners might be able to watch the web-based stimuli *Shift Matters* or *Did you know 2.0* - short films that focus on some of the challenges facing our world, including those related to population.



➡ What do I think now ?

Reflect on how close learners’ estimates about population were. Do the real answers matter? Why?

What is the thing that they will take away in thinking about this issue?

➡ Why do I think this ?

This question deepens the critical literacy skills of learners. Where learners are able to trace the origins of their thoughts and feelings (family, experience, peers, media etc) they can become confident to challenge their own thoughts and engage with the ideas and opinions of others.

This is also the most challenging part of the process and teachers/facilitators will need to decide whether to include this stage when working with younger or less able learners. We feel it remains vital for teachers/facilitators to be aware of and reflect on this stage for themselves as it may help to deal with responses and reactions from learners, and identify future learning needs.

4 How many people?

If you feel confident to explore your learners' thoughts and feelings in greater depth you could gently encourage learners to think about the following questions/issues in relation to this activity:

- *What things have I heard people say about population?*
- *What experiences have I had of the challenges or opportunities of population? Have these experiences meant that I think certain things about this topic?*

Teachers might use examples such as:

I get stuck in traffic on the way to school in the morning because there are so many cars.

My mum says that because so many people live in Birmingham there'll always be work for nurses.

Extension ideas



Where can we take this thinking ?

Lifeworlds Learning are creating some resources for teachers, facilitators and learners to explore population issues in a world of 7 billion people. The project called **7 billion reasons**, can be accessed at:

www.lifeworldslearning.co.uk/projects.html

7 billion actions is a new UN campaign launched to mark the moment in history of passing 7 billion. Although most of the materials are not suitable for primary learners, the site might be helpful if carefully vetted and can help you as a teacher to support their learning.

www.7billionactions.org

If you have used this activity in your classroom and have any examples you would like to share or would like to provide any comments or feedback as a teacher then we'd love to hear from you.

We want **Time 2 Think** to evolve into a community of practice to further develop ideas and organise events and opportunities, but for this we need the involvement of users such as yourself.

Send any contributions, or contact us to find out more, at ask@lifeworldslearning.co.uk