

As part of the **Everything is Connected** season in partnership with the Cultural Programme at the University of Oxford, The Story Museum is collaborating with authors and artists to imagine a brighter future. Leading writers Patience Agbabi, Piers Torday, Sita Brahmachari and Ben Okri have each created a short story that shows their visions of the future, encouraging us all to reflect on the potential of a brighter world through the power of stories.

# The Tree, The Sea and Me

By Piers Torday

## Part 1: Pre-reading activities

<p><b>1. Thematic freeze frame</b></p>	<p>Students walk around the room in a relaxed, neutral way.</p> <p>Teacher calls out a number - e.g. 3 - and the class form small groups of the given number. Teacher calls out a word (see below) and the group quickly create a freeze frame/tableau to show their interpretation of the word:</p> <p><b>growth                      memories                      drifting                      panic                      hope</b>  <b>conflict                      relaxation                      inspiration                      confusion</b></p> <p>After this activity, write the words above on the board. Ask the students, if this was a story, what might be happening in the story? Discuss in pairs and feed back.</p>
<p><b>2. Discussion</b></p>	<p>Ask students if any of them have ever experienced a flood – what happened/ who was affected? You may like to use <b>Resource A</b> fact sheet to augment the discussion.</p> <p>Divide into 6 groups and allocate a photograph from <b>Resource B</b> to each group. Students make notes around each photo according to the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o what has happened?</li> <li>o was this taken before, during or after a flood?</li> <li>o why do think it happened?</li> <li>o could anything have been done to prevent the flood?</li> <li>o how would the flood water affect the people who live there?</li> <li>o how do you think people feel during a flood?</li> <li>o What might be the long term effects?</li> </ul> <p>Groups feedback their thoughts to the group. Then, in pairs, think about your own home. Where/How would the water get in? List at least three places as quickly as you can.</p> <p>Feedback. Who has come up with an unusual place? Through the letterbox, in via the cat flap, up through the water pipes, through the plug hole in the sink?</p>

### 3. Grab bag game

Explain that due to increased flooding in the UK residents in high-risk areas have been advised to have a grab bag with items in that might be useful if they are ever flooded again.

Discuss in pairs and feed back: what would you think of as being essential? It might be something **practical**, like a mobile phone, first aid kit or a torch or it may be something **personal** like favourite teddy, book or photo.

If possible show the students real survival items in a dry bag – eg compass, whistle, solar charger, water sterilisation tablets, wind up radio.

Discuss how these items might be useful in an emergency situation.

Students divide into groups. Each group is given a copy of **Resource C** and **Resource D** and follows the following steps:

- o Cut out the 15 photo items in Resource C.
- o Discuss which ones you think are essential to pack in your flood grab bag: you can only take 9 of them. How will you decide?
- o If there is something else you would pack then write or draw it on the **your choice** square.
- o When you have decided on your 9 items, decide which of them is the most important.
- o Using **Resource D**, arrange your items in a diamond with the most important on the top, then the 2 next most essential in the next row, and so on.

Groups feed back their Diamond 9 choices and compare theirs with the other groups. After everyone has presented, reflect: Would you like to change your mind about any of your choices?

## Part 2: Share the story

### Discussion Questions during the reading of the story

Piers Torday's story is divided into chapters. You may wish to pause at each chapter for the following questions:

- o **Chapter 1**  
How do you think the child felt when they visited their grandmother's house?  
Why do you think they chose the painting?
- o **Chapter 2**  
What was the "thing" that happened?  
What might the government announcements have said?  
If you had to choose just one of your special possessions to take with you, what would it be?
- o **Chapter 3**  
How do you think spaces on the boat should have been allocated?  
How would you persuade the army to let you and your family on board?
- o **Chapter 4**  
What might be on the island if it were in your dream?
- o **Chapter 5**  
How might the island provide for the family's future?  
What difficulties might there be in the future for the people?
- o **Chapter 6**  
How might the characters feel when the boat sinks?  
This story is about a disaster which affects the characters. Do you think the author offers you any hope at the end?

## Part 3: Post-reading activities

<b>1. Drama freeze frame</b>	<p>Each group of students chooses part of the story to create a freeze frame for. They practise and then perform for the class. Ask students to think about facial expressions and body positions to help convey emotions the characters are feeling.</p> <p>Everyone else can guess which part of the story they are showing.</p> <p><b>Suggested freeze frames</b></p> <p>Chapter 1: the garden in summer Chapter 2: gathering possessions in readiness for evacuation Chapter 3: finding a space to sleep on board the ship Chapter 4: exploring the dream island Chapter 5: worries about the future Chapter 6: in the water</p>
<b>2. Synaesthesia activities</b>	<p>Divide the students into 6 groups and allocate them a chapter each. Give out each worksheet from <b>Resource E</b>, which contains each the chapter written out. Each worksheet has activities for annotations of the text, such as colouring certain words certain colours, writing associative synonyms, and drawing pictures.</p>

## Part 4: Creative writing development

In small groups, students discuss and step out what might happen in the next chapter of *The Tree, the Sea and Me*. Groups then make freeze frames of the following steps:

- o Chapter 6 of the story – treading water with parents after the shipwreck.
- o Arrive on the island –how difficult is it to reach the shore? What are your first impressions after making it to shore?
- o What do you do first to survive? Build a shelter/ Explore / Look for food?
- o What problem might present itself? This could be a natural phenomena or manmade eg the weather could be inhospitable or people could start fighting over the resources on the island.
- o How do you overcome the problem?
- o How do you start to organise yourselves on the island to make sure humans look after the island in the future? Can you come up with your own conventions that will protect your new home?

Students should discuss each step of the story and then, using **Resource F**, create a series of speech or thought bubbles which illustrate each step.

Independently, students then write their next chapters for the story, using this structure. **Resource G** may be used as a writing frame. See **Resource H** for a modelled example.

## Part 5: Extension activities

<b>1. Close reading</b>	In the story, Piers Torday has included direct and indirect references to all 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. See <b>Resource I</b> for the Sustainable Development Goals. Can they spot a reference to every single one within the story <i>The Tree, The Sea and Me</i> ?
<b>2. Comic strip characters</b>	<p>After exploring the UN Sustainable Development Goals, students choose to create a mascot to represent one of the goals.</p> <p>For example:  <b>Otter the Water Warden's</b> key roles are to prevent water waste, keep plastic out of rivers and campaigning against sewage spills. (He relates to Goal 6. Clean water and sanitation; , Goal 12. Responsible consumption and production, and Goal 14. Life below water.</p> <p>Students draw their mascot as cartoon character, labelling their characteristics and writing a slogan in a speech bubble. They can use Resource J for the comic strip, and Resource K for a modelled example.</p>
<b>2. Share</b>	Students share their characters. The rest of the class can match the characters to the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Further reading

### Books (age ranges are an indication only)

- *Greta and the Giants* by Zoe Tucker/Zoe Persico (4- 7 years)
- *Maybe You Might* by Imogen Foxall (4- 8 years)
- *The Fog* by Kyo Maclear (4- 8 years)
- *George Saves the World by Lunchtime* by Jo Readman (5- 7 years)
- *The Boy Who Grew A Forest* by Sophia Gholz (5- 8 years)
- *Follow the Moon Home: A Tale of One Idea, Twenty Kids, and a Hundred Sea Turtles* by Deborah Hopkinson and Philippe Cousteau (5- 12 years)
- *The Window* by Jeannie Baker (5+ years)
- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (5+ years)  
*"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not". Dr Seuss in The Lorax*
- *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry (6- 12 years)
- *The House of Light* by Julia Green (9-11 years)
- *Where the River Runs Gold* by Sita Brahmachari (10-13 years)
- *FloodWorld* by Tom Huddleston (10- 14 years)
- *The Wild Folk* by Sylvia V Linsteadt (10-12 years)
- *The Dog Runner* by Bren MacDibble (12- 14 years)
- *Exodus* by Julie Bertagna (13+ years)
- *Earth Heroes: Twenty Inspiring Stories of People Saving Our World* by Lily Dyu (non-fiction)
- *The Children of the Anthropocene: Stories from the Young People at the Heart of the Climate Crisis* by Bella Lack
- *Si'ahl and the Council of Animals: A Story of Our Changing Climate for Children* by Jane Lister Reis and Margie Lister Muenzer
- *The Adventure of Polo the Bear: a story of climate change* by Alan J. Hesse

### Films

- **The Great Realization** – 2020 film by Tomfoolery
- *The Lorax* – 2012
- *The Last Airbender* (2010)
- *Avatar* (2009) and *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022)
- *Wall-e* – 2008
- *Bee Movie* – 2007
- *Princess Mononoke* (1997)

## Resource A

### Background information on flooding for teachers

Key facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Floods can occur anywhere in the world.</li> <li>○ Flooding is caused by rainfall.</li> <li>○ Flooding can be made worse by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• storms (as more water enters rivers);</li> <li>• deforestation (as tree roots and leaves soak up water);</li> <li>• covering the ground with buildings and hard surfaces;</li> <li>• heavy rainfall for a prolonged time as the ground becomes saturated;</li> <li>• hard dry ground – after a drought the ground does not let any water soak in.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Some causes of flooding are man made (deforestation, hard surfaces and changes to the climate).</li> <li>○ Storms may become more frequent due to climate change. In the UK storms are named by the Met Office to raise awareness of extreme weather systems.</li> </ul>
Pertinent news reports	<p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/forteachers/water/power/ft_cl_water_power_report.shtml">https://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/forteachers/water/power/ft_cl_water_power_report.shtml</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/weather/case-studies/boscastle">https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/weather/case-studies/boscastle</a></p>
Useful websites	<p><a href="#"><u>The flood hub</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Royal Geographic Society</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>BBC Teach</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>The Red Cross</u></a></p>



## Resource B

### Image for Group 1



## Resource B

### Image for Group 2





## Resource B

### Image for Group 3



## Resource B

### Image for Group 4





## Resource B

### Image for Group 5



## Resource B

### Image for Group 6



## Resource C



Mobile phone



Wellington boots



Books



Waterproof coat



First aid kit



Candles



Bottled water



Medicines



## Resource C



Blankets



Toys



Torch



Tinned food



Cash



Jumpers



Electronic game



Your choice



## Resource D

A pyramid diagram consisting of 10 empty rectangular boxes arranged in five rows. The top row has one box. The second row has two boxes. The third row has three boxes. The fourth row has two boxes. The bottom row has one box. This structure is used for sequencing events in a story.

## Resource E

### Chapter 1 for Group 1

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Use pencil crayons to highlight any words which have a specific colour associated with them.

eg colour carrots **orange**, colour ivy **green**

Discuss what colour will you use for summer? Or for sleep?

When you have finished have a look at the text and decide whether there is a dominant colour for this chapter.

#### Task 2

Find and circle any words or phrases which appeal to your five senses. Draw a mini-illustration or doodle for each one.

eg House martins are tiny blue-black birds which make nests from mud under the eaves of houses. *Draw a mud nest with a bird darting away.*

eg honey is sweet and sticky. *Draw a calligram for either of those words.*

## 1. A Picture

The summer the thing happened was also the summer my grandmother died. We went to clear out her house. I was twelve years old, and my parents had promised I could keep one thing to remember Nana by. She had lived in a country cottage held together by climbing roses, ivy, and love. House martins made nests behind the solar panels every year, and there were beehives in the garden. Here she had also grown beans, carrots and very delicious potatoes - a few of which she left out for passers-by.

There were so many things I could have taken to remind me of her; her old gardening gloves, the battered picture book we loved to read together, or even a jar of homemade honey.

But I didn't take any of them.

Instead, I took the painting.

It hung high on the far wall of my bedroom when I stayed. Nana never got the curtains to close properly, so the moonlight always fell on this picture as I drifted off to sleep.

A child on top of a palm tree on an island, looking out to the horizon.

## Resource E

### Chapter 2 for Group 2

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Use pencil crayons to highlight any words which have a specific colour associated with them.

eg colour street lamps ~~white~~, or **orange**

Discuss what colour will you use for sleep or for dreams? Do different people in your group have different ideas?

When you have finished have a look at the text and decide whether there is a dominant colour for this chapter.

#### Task 2

In each paragraph discuss the feelings the character might be having, how light or dark the paragraph is and any smells or sounds they might be experiencing. Jot these down around each paragraph.

Draw a mini-illustration or doodle for each paragraph: focus on the lamps and searchlights in paragraph 1, the dream in 2, the messages in 3 and the folded picture in 4.

## 2. The Thing That Happened

We went back home to the city and hung the picture in my room in our flat, so I could see it from my bed as I went to sleep, this time lit by street lamps and the searchlights in the sky.

Sometimes I dreamed about the child and the tree in the middle of the sea. Not long after that, the thing happened.

Government announcements were on loudspeakers in the streets, our phones pinged with messages, and leaflets flooded the letterbox. We had to gather on the quayside by nine am the following morning, with only essential possessions.

I wanted to take the painting. My parents disagreed, saying it was too big. So I carefully dismantled the frame, removed the picture, and folded it to slip inside my pocket.

A child on top of a palm tree on an island, looking out to the horizon.

## Resource E

### Chapter 3 for Group 3

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Use pencil crayons to highlight any words which have a specific colour associated with them.

eg colour rising waves **grey**, colour shouting **red**

Discuss what colour will you use for summer? Or for sleep?

When you have finished have a look at the text and decide whether there is a dominant colour for this chapter.

#### Task 2

Find and circle any words or phrases which appeal to your five senses. Draw a mini-illustration or doodle for each one.

eg A metal floor along a corridor. *Draw how this would look, and with a person trying to sleep – how do they feel, and how would this show in their facial expression?*

## 3. The Journey

There weren't enough spaces for everybody on the ship, as promised, and there were fights. Eventually, the army was called in. Somehow, we got on board. Others had taken all the beds that night before we even got close, so we slept curled up on a metal floor along a corridor on one of the lower decks.

I say "slept", but it was hard with all the swaying, shouting, and screaming.

So I took out the picture, unfolded it, and stared at the scene as the rhythm of the ship rolling on the rising waves of our flooding planet gradually lulled me asleep.

## Resource E

### Chapter 4 for Group 4

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Circle all the words and phrases which appeal to one of your senses: sight, smell, touch, sound, taste using colourful pencils. Choose your favourite three each and draw a little doodle on the text for each.

#### Task 2

Use cellophane to cut out shapes to represent the colourful plants, fruits, flowers, herbs, grasses, water, birds, animals mentioned in the chapter.

Lay the cellophane shapes over a white piece of paper to create a colourful overlay. What is the overall effect – how does it represent the chapter?

## 4. The Tree

That night I dreamed I was the child in the picture. From the top of the tree, I could see that my island was one of many dotted all over the ocean. I clambered down to explore and discovered that my tree was in the centre of an incredible garden, boasting the strangest and most beautiful plants I had ever seen. A treasure trove, shining with white and red flowers, dripping with golden fruit. I was starving and helped myself to a few of its riches. There seemed more than enough to go around.

I strolled about, touching the soft leaves and grasses, smelling the sweet fragrances and savoury herbs, and breathing the island's fresh air. With every step, I became calmer, happier, and more relaxed.

After a gulp of water from a sparkling fresh stream, I set out to discover the rest of this magical place. Monkeys hooted at me from the treetops, and birds with rainbow feathers hovered over the flowers. Some deer trotted down a path into a forest beyond, and I followed them.

The path led down through the trees to a gleaming white beach, where I paddled in the crystal clear shallows for a while, looking at all the different fish swimming about my ankles. And as the fish swam and the waves lapped back and forth on the shore, ideas started floating into my head.

## Resource E

### Chapter 5 for Group 5

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Circle all the words and phrases which appeal to your sense of sound.

Choose musical instruments to create a sound scape for this chapter.

Choose 2 or 3 overlapping sounds for each paragraph. Decide for each paragraph whether the soundscape should be quiet or loud, gentle or harsh, continuous or broken, metallic or wooden.

#### Task 2

Perform the sound scape to other groups. Can they match the sounds you chose to the text?

## 5. The Sea

What a place this would be for me and my parents to live in now our city had gone! It was so peaceful and beautiful and had everything we needed.

We could sleep on hammocks between the trees...and make shelters from fallen branches and leaves. The garden would feed us, and the herbs could heal us. And we would only take what we needed, looking after the plants and animals as Nana had taught me.

Then other thoughts came, shouting across one another in my head.

What about all the other people on the boat? Where would they live? Where would the children go to school? Who would look after us when we got sick? What would everyone do for a job? Could we make sure the thing never happened again?

More and more thoughts swam in, the shouting getting louder and louder.

Which was when I realised I was no longer dreaming.



## Resource E

### Chapter 6 for Group 6

Re-read the chapter together.

#### Task 1

Build up the texture of the text by highlighting any words which are afloat or above the water. Build these up to create islands of text. Colour the words that are in the water in sea colours eg greens, blues

#### Task 2

Discuss each paragraph and decide on the emotion which matches it best. Write the matching emotion in a colour which suits it. For example, 'fear' might be in dark grey, like the whale.

## 6. Me

We were all in the water, shouting for help, crying out to each other in the dark. Something had happened to the ship, which was on its side, like a big grey sinking whale. I held hands with my parents in a ring, and we trod water to stay afloat.

It was strange at such a time to think about anything other than staying alive and helping others do the same, but I wondered what had happened to my painting. Who knows, but I may have spotted some sodden fragments drifting away on the waves before us.

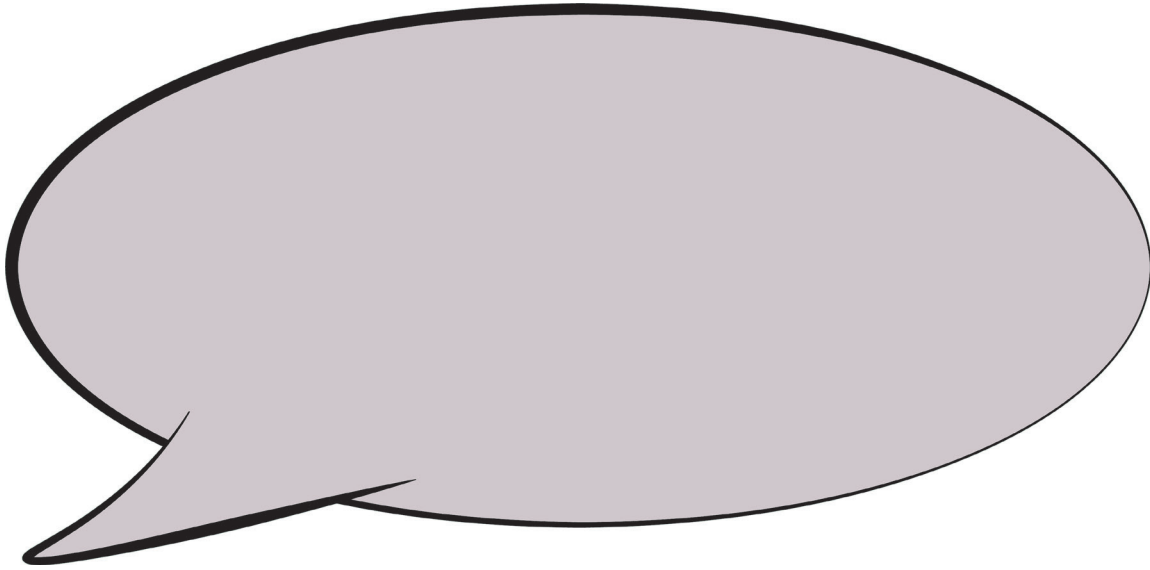
Then, as the sun slowly rose over the dark sea, everything changed.

In the distance, I saw an island with a palm tree.

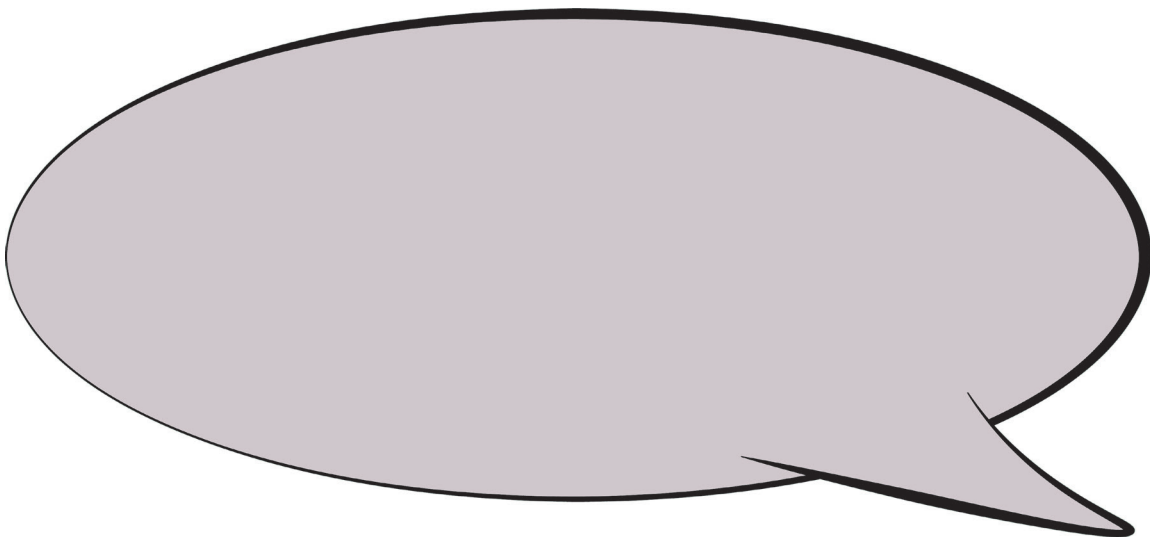
And I knew what we had to do.

## Resource F

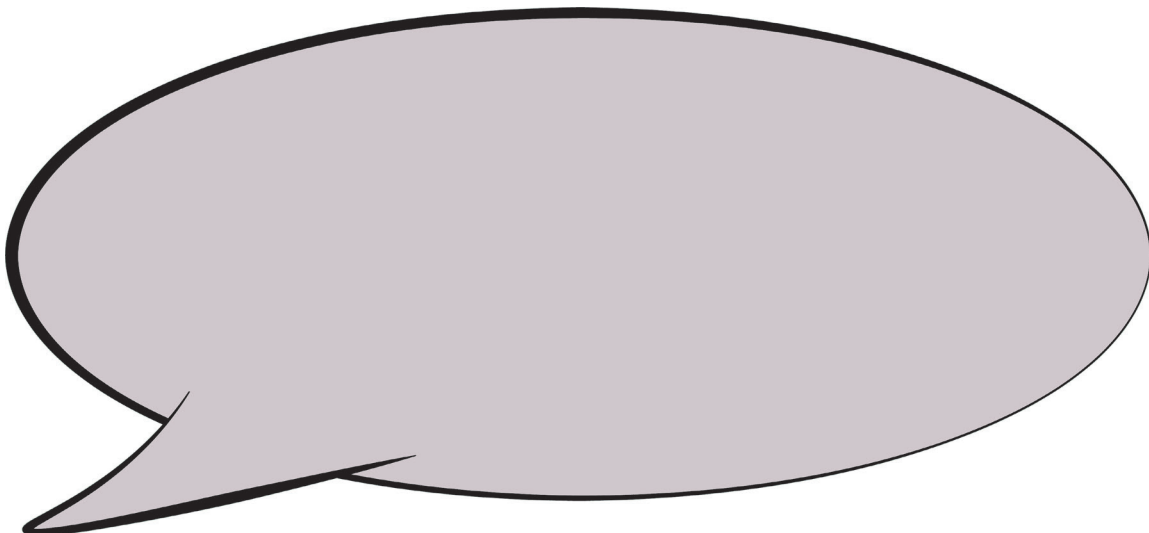
What did you say when you were in the water?



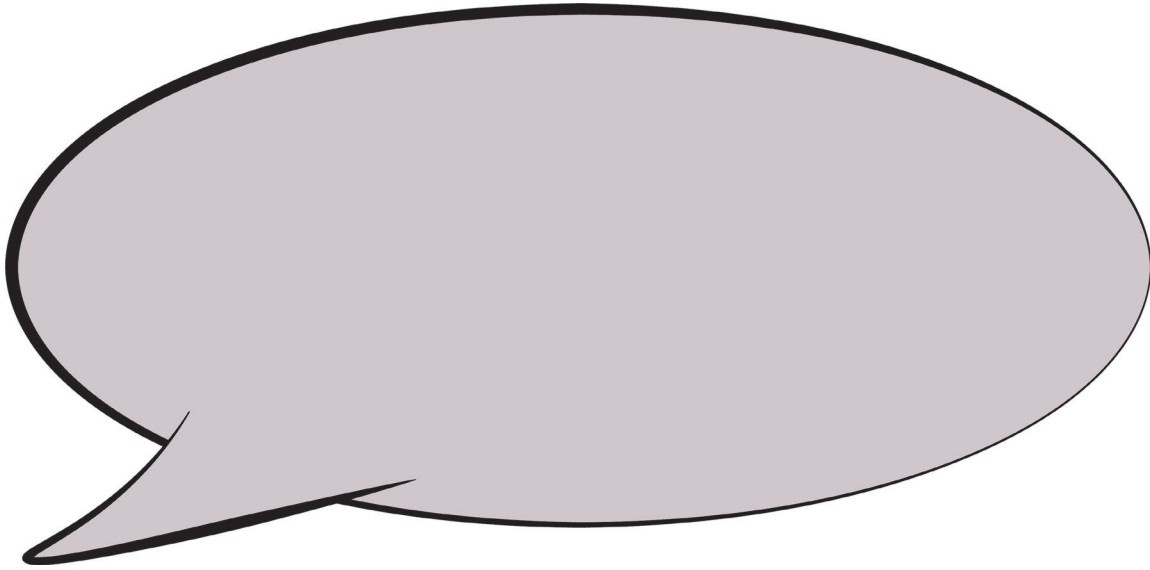
What did you say when you first arrived on the island? Include how you felt, what you could see and hear.



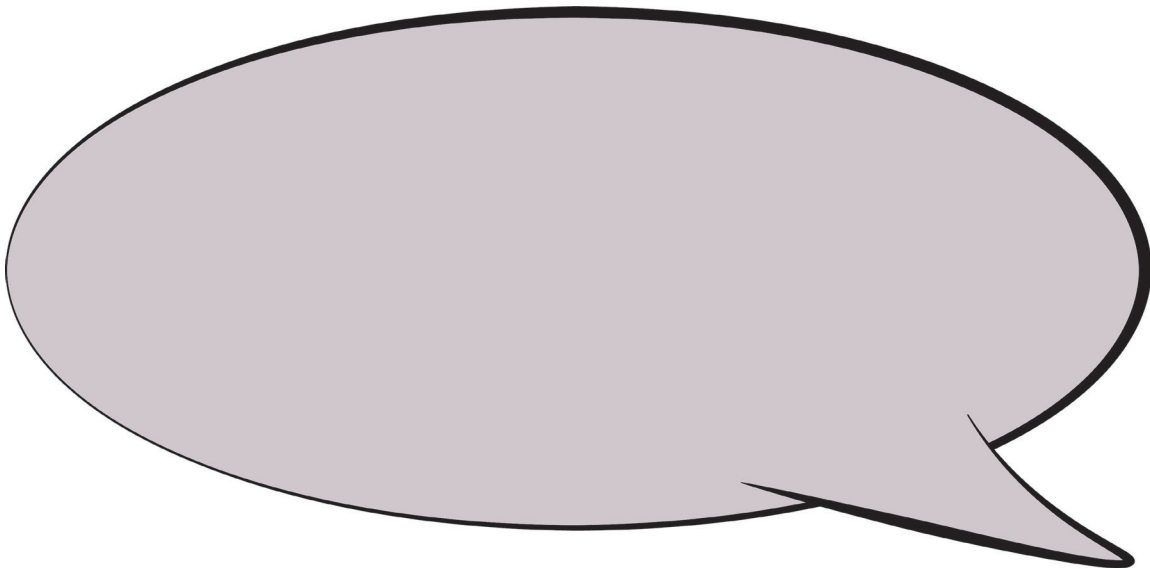
What did you say as you started to plan your survival?



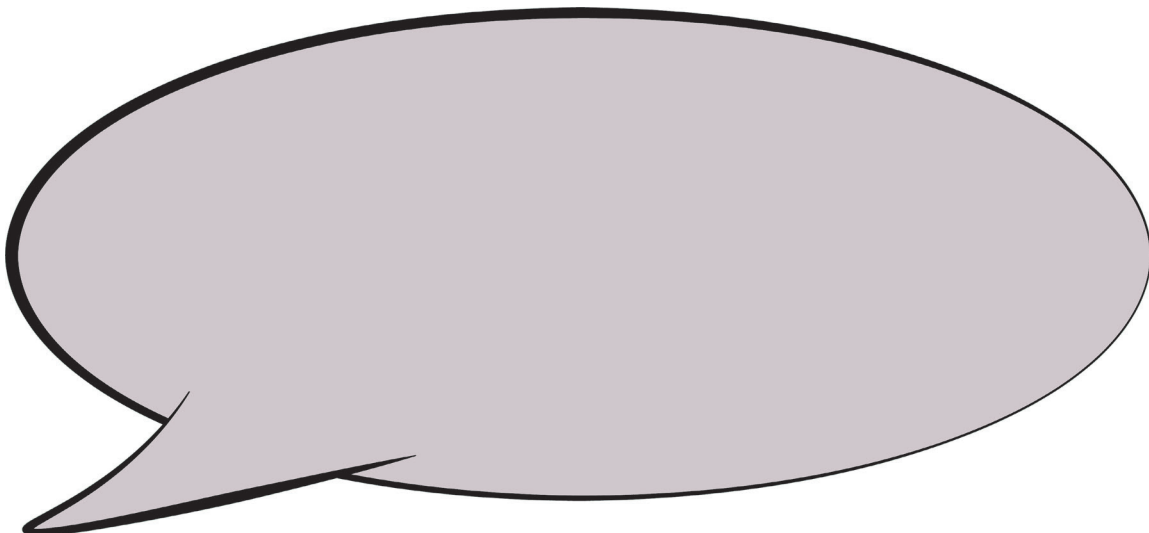
**What did you say as the problem first presented itself?**



**What did you say to help overcome the problem?**



**What did you say as you planned for a better future?**



## Resource G

### Story scaffold

Story structure	Questions	Suggested vocabulary	Story notes
<b>Setting &amp; character</b>	<p><b><i>After Chapter 6 of the story – treading water after the shipwreck.</i></b></p> <p>Who is your character? Who are they with?</p>	Wet, dark, cold, salty, swaying, bobbing, scared, tired, splashes	
<b>Problem</b>	<p><b><i>Arrive on the island</i></b></p> <p>How difficult is it to reach the shore? What are your first impressions after making it to shore?</p> <p>What do you do first to survive? Build a shelter/ Explore / Look for food?</p> <p>What problem might present itself?</p>	Light, warm, grains of sand, breaking waves, relief, footprints in the sand, Fruit, colourful, hot, sweet, juicy, rushing water, wind in trees, rough bark, humidity	
<b>Climax</b>	<p>What goes wrong?</p> <p>How does this affect the characters?</p> <p>Does this affect anyone/ anything else and in what way?</p>	<p>Selfish, fighting, hotheaded, isolated, frightened,</p> <p>Storm, monsoon, thunder, lightning, flash flood, disaster, destruction</p>	
<b>Resolution</b>	<p>How do the characters solve the problem?</p> <p>Is there a twist to the story?</p>	Shared values, resilience, teamwork, empathy, communication, rules. Goals, code of conduct, mutual support, points of view, listening	
<b>Ending</b>	<p>How do you start to organise yourselves on the island to make sure humans look after the island in the future? Can you come up with your own conventions that will protect your new home?</p> <p>What happens next?</p> <p>How does the story hint at the problem to come?</p> <p>Does the main character team up with a friend/helper character?</p>	Hopeful, positive, agreement, sharing, kindness, respect for nature, respect for community, resourcefulness	

## Resource H

### Example story outline

Story structure	Simple modelled example
<b>Opening</b>	<p>Treading water, we clung to one another and waited for the night to pass. Trying not to think about the storm or about sharks which may already have sensed us in the water, we forced each other to keep our heads above the grey, salty sea. The dawn crept slowly over the horizon, and I glimpsed a single tree in the distance. Could it be my island?</p>
<b>Problem</b>	<p>We staggered onto the beach with the waves breaking over us. I was almost used to the salt-water taste in my mouth, but my legs were jellified by the long hours spent in the water and I had to crawl over the broken shells on the shore to find dry land.</p> <p>We made our way inland, seeing flashes of colourful feathers above us. They were so much more vibrant than the grey shabby pigeons we'd left behind. The trees positively dipped with fruits, most of which I couldn't name, and the air filled with the scent of berries and spices. Maybe our luck had changed. Maybe this was paradise. Maybe...</p> <p>"You've got to taste this!" yelled a small dark-haired boy from a clearing just ahead of me. I joined a small crowd of other survivors who had gathered around him as he held onto a round orange-green fruit. We watched him bite into the fruit and our mouths watered as the juice dribbled down his chin.</p>
<b>Climax</b>	<p>"Oi, hands off! That tree's mine!" shouted a rough voice from behind me. I turned to see a tall woman in a torn dress striding through the clearing. Soon it became apparent that the island was being sectioned off as desperate survivors made claim to a piece of land. Tempers were frayed and I saw more than one fight break out as opposing groups strayed into each other's territories in search of food, water and shelter.</p>
<b>Resolution</b>	<p>As the days passed the atmosphere on the island worsened. The opposing groups had started to form allegiances and there were two that were beginning to dominate. Some families joined up with a group hoping for protection and security. Others remained solitary or in their small family group hoping to keep their heads down and avoid trouble. When I wasn't looking for food or water, I remembered nostalgically the visits I had to grandma's house. It seemed a world away, but perhaps it was offering me a solution.</p> <p>A plan began to form in my mind. I would need to find some supporters. It would take courage but maybe it would work.</p>
<b>Ending</b>	<p>A crowd had gathered in the largest clearing. I was thrilled to see that the lead members of the biggest groups were there, including the woman who had shouted at the little boy on the first day.</p> <p>When it was my turn to speak, I drew myself up and took a deep breath. I told them about my grandmother's garden and how she lived connected to the earth and her community. I told them of my dream about an idyllic island, where resources were plentiful and people lived peaceably with each other and nature. I told them how our human behaviour had affected the communities where we had come from and I told them how important it was that we learned from the past and made changes in the future.</p> <p>A few of the most outspoken adults started to murmur in agreement. My words had hit home. My story resonated with their stories.</p> <p>We sat together in the clearing and began to thrash out a new beginning- a beginning of hope.</p>

## Resource I

### The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

### Links to resources for students to understand the UN Sustainable Development Goals on the UN website:

<https://www.un.org/actnow>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/11/un-campaign-empowers-kids-to-take-climate-action-and-protect-the-planet/>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



## Resource J

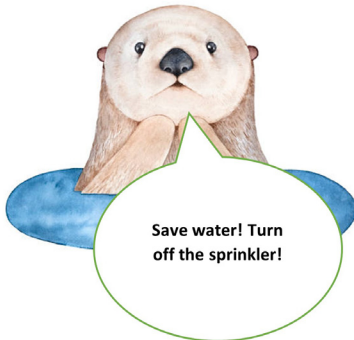

## Resource K



This is Otter the Water Warden. She wants our rivers and reservoirs to be full of clean and safe water. Her mottos are "Save Water" and "Turn off the tap!"



Oh no! A Water Waster has turned on their sprinkler and left it running.



Otter shows water waster how to use a water butt to collect rainwater in the garden.



Now the Water Waster is a water collector and uses rainfall to water their garden. Hooray!