

RESOURCES

Earth wise

Graham Hart on strategies for global survival

What We Consume: Unit 1 Society and Nature. 0 85546 061 X. Unit 4 United Kingdom Agriculture. 064 4. Unit 5 Brazil. 065. 2. Unit 8 China. 068 7. Teachers' Handbook. 060 1. Unit Co-ordinator John Huckle. £9.95 each (Teachers' Handbook £7.95).

World Wide Fund for Nature and the Richmond Publishing Company, Orchard Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4PD.

Earthwatch Now: 0 85546 352 X. **Earthwatch 2086.** 353 8. Unit Co-ordinator Roger Morgan. £12.95 each. World Wide Fund for Nature and the Richmond Publishing Company.

GeoActive Series 1: 1989/90. ISSN 0956-0629. Series Editor Simon Ross. £25 per year.

Mary Glasgow Publications, Avenue House, 131-133 Holland Park Avenue, London W11 4UT.

What We Consume and *Earthwatch* titles are both part of the Global Environmental Education Programme (GEEP), a major project produced in response to the 1980 publication of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' *World Conservation Strategy*. One of the important conclusions of that document was that current global environmental action tended to be of a stop gap nature and longer-term solutions were required. Education was identified as the major vehicle for the promotion and achievement of those solutions.

And if that short explanation sounds rather like the official line, perhaps to be uttered by some well meaning dignitary at a public relations ceremony, then that's because it's a précis of the GEEP preface to their materials. Haven't we heard it all before? From the most humble committee member to the most vainglorious of third world leaders, from the government and from the church... indeed, from almost everywhere, it's the same

message: education is the important key to the future. We must devote our energies to education. Without education we have no future.

Yes, the message is clear. But so often there's nothing behind the words. Teachers are charged with the responsibility but not given the resources. That's why it would be nice to be a dignitary asked to launch the GEEP materials, because they are the real thing - materials for education, published by the World Wide Fund for Nature. They are relevant, practical and affordable. Furthermore they have an excellent pedigree, have been rigorously tested and are packed with information which can be used both within and well beyond the framework of the proposed activities.

The two *Earthwatch* packs each consist of a book, 36 colour transparencies and about 30 photocopy master cards. They are intended for use in the 11-13 age range. *Earthwatch Now* is subtitled "Children's Actions and their Environment" and introduces a wide range of issues such as air pollution, deforestation, the growth of urban areas, wildlife depletion and the uses of leisure time. There is a familiar mix of simulations, games, data-response questions and group activities as well as some teachers' notes within the book. It all fits together well. *Earthwatch 2086*, subtitled "Children's Decisions and the Future" concentrates upon a number of themes through the medium of one topic, the life of a Scottish loch from the 1700s to the year 2086. This includes a similar mixture of techniques and possibilities to *Earthwatch Now*.

There was only one question mark over the *Earthwatch* packs: why include photocopy master cards when the same pages are in the teachers' books? Anybody reading *Brazil* in the *What We Consume* series will tell you that trees are precious. The *What We Consume* books are a combination of

pages, for the teachers and others, that can be photocopied for class use. The only extra resource provided is a wallet of black and white prints inside the back cover of each title. *What We Consume* is intended for use throughout the 11-16 range but, wisely, the publishers suggest that the top end of that range might be the most appropriate.

All the books in the series are packed with information organized around a number of teaching activities. An extensive range of sources is used to provide the background, with official figures mingling with pressure group publications. Newspaper reports in particular bring a sense of immediacy to the whole project.

In reviewing and testing such a wealth of materials it is only possible to scratch the surface. Teachers will soon discover what works best. I would certainly recommend purchasing the teachers' handbook for *What We Consume*, not for practical tips on the presentation of the material but for a quick review of the aims of the programme and also for some valuable extra information on the issues developed throughout. It's also worth noting that the four topic books listed here come from a list of 10; forthcoming topics include *The Environment and Democracy*, *Ethiopia and Our Consumer Society*. If the standards and styles developed thus far are anything to go by, the publishers will not be pulling any punches in getting their message over.

These are serious books, with a serious intention. We ought to be grateful for the work that has gone into them. It has to be said that the message is rather gloomy, despite the numerous solutions that appear to be available. Perhaps this is one of the problems of teaching in this area. Although charged with the responsibility of environmental education, teachers may end up feeling a part of "them" - the



spoiling generation - rather than a part of the caring, more modest and less greedy future that many, though by no means all of us, hope and pray for.

To include *GeoActive* within this review as something of a postscript would be very unfair. The concept deserves proper attention. The aim is simple, to provide a body of topical information and activities for GCSE students in the form of photocopiable A4 sheets. Every year the publishers will issue three sets of such sheets covering seven topics each time. A school pays £25 for the year.

The advantages are obvious. The material can be kept up to date, the loose-leaf format is very flexible and each issue can respond to recent world news, saving teachers a lot of work in pulling together news clippings etc. The first issue deals with the Channel

Tunnel, the greenhouse effect, Hurricane Gilbert, the north and south economic divide in Britain, earthquakes, wind energy in the UK and manufacturing in Malaysia - a pretty broad canvas. In addition to the units, each of four pages in black and white, there are some teachers' notes.

I suspect that this might be a very popular, if not entirely new, idea. My experience suggests that teachers might like to know what to expect in a forthcoming issue (although still allowing scope for the "stop press" item of course) and that they would happily sacrifice a little of the production quality for more immediacy and a lower price. It's a pity that you can't browse at a news-stand to see if you like what you're getting. But if you'll take my word for it, try it for a year and I don't think you'll be disappointed.

What We Consume, Unit 1: Society and Nature. 99pp. + photographs. ISBN 0 85546 061 X. **Unit 8: China: Beijing A Livable City?** 114pp. + photographs. ISBN 0 85546 068 7. 21 x 29.5cm. £9.95 each + p&p. Teacher's Handbook. 67pp. £7.95 + p&p. ISBN 0 85546 060 1. World Wide Fund United Kingdom. (Global Environmental Education Programme). Slough: The Richmond Publishing Company/WWF, 1988.

What we consume is a collection of ten units produced under the 'umbrella' of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Global Environmental Education Project.

By any standards *What we consume* is an impressive, carefully formulated and thought-provoking collection of materials, utilising a variety of different sources and encouraging innovative, issue-based pupil activity and learning. The units enable pupils, "... to study different forms of development and underdevelopment, recognise their impact on nature and the environment and consider alternatives which are more ecologically sustainable".

At a time when environmental issues are rising to the top of national and international political agendas, this series is particularly welcome.

Amongst the ten units, some are thematic, such as No.2 "The rise of industrial society", whilst others are place specific such as No.6, "Ethiopia: war, famine and desertification". Each unit has a common structure; an A4 format, 100-120 pages in length, an introduction with key ideas, 10 classroom activities with photocopyable activity sheets and a set of 10 large black and white photographs.

Activities have been developed and trialled by a group of Bedfordshire teachers and include role plays, case studies, simulation games, photoanalysis and other teaching techniques. The authors suggest that the materials are suitable for "flexible use within 11-16 Geography, Humanities and Social Studies curricula" and are perhaps most useful for GCSE level 14-16 year old children. There is, however, plenty of scope for adapting the materials for use throughout the secondary school and even for the top end of the primary school.

The Teacher's Handbook explains the rationale behind the series and places the different units into an overall framework which seeks to promote "...a form of environmental education designed to encourage reflection on the present use of nature within different societies and action in support of those seeking to extend democracy and environmental well being". The teacher is then presented with a set of 21 readings which shaped the curriculum rationale of 'What we consume'.

A list of useful addresses for more detail and follow up work is also included. Users of the series would do well to read the Teacher's Handbook before they embark on any of the ten units.

The two units, 1. "Society and nature" and 8. "China: Beijing a livable city?" provide a useful contrast between thematic and place specific units. But again to provide coherence to the series, each unit includes a 'curriculum matrix' indicating in which of the 10 activities the different 'key questions' and 'key ideas' are raised, and at the start of each new activity teachers are given a thorough background under the headings; purpose, preparation, procedure, variations/extensions and background reading.

In "Society and Nature" there is a range of interesting activities in which children can imagine they are time travellers at different points in time and space, and consider the value of wildlife and issues such as multinationals, pesticides and ecodevelopment. The photo-set provides a useful case study of IBM and the company's policy towards the environment.

The unit on China makes fascinating reading and the authors must be commended on gleaning their material from a wide range of sources. Rather a pity that the momentous events of June 1989 are not included, though no doubt a later edition would take note of these. The unit gives a generally accurate view of modern Beijing and succeeds in broadening the picture of China to include reference to Special Economic Zones, transport, biogas, pollution, health care and housing. In all cases

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a good range of sources and stimulus materials are presented and pupils are encouraged to debate the issues and empathise whenever possible.

WWF has done well to produce *What we consume* and its catalogue of other educational publications is also most impressive. How can any teacher make their classroom work boring with such materials available? The issues raised are certainly controversial and entwined in politics, but surely teachers and others have a duty to enlighten young people on these matters. One lives in hope that the emerging National Curriculum will not impose too much of a straightjacket that could stifle such work and the use of such materials.

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