Met Office

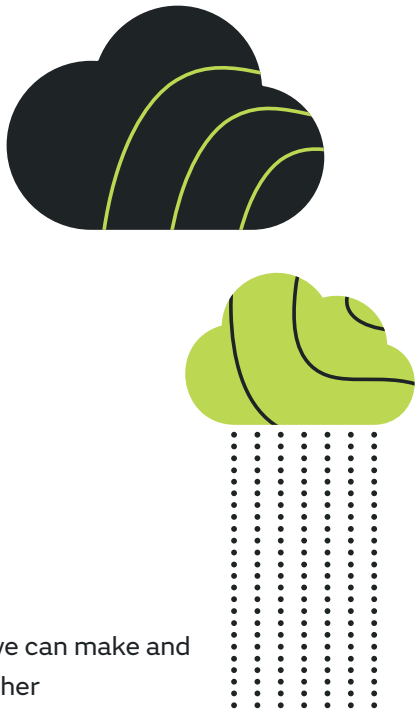
Age range: 7-11

Forecasting fact-busters

Introduction

Overview

This lesson addresses the different ways we can make and communicate predictions about the weather and tell 'weather stories'. Pupils will be introduced to the different ways information can be presented, including fact, exaggeration, fake news or fiction. It also draws on how prediction and risk analysis is a key part of meteorologists' work.



Time required

75 minutes for all activities (or less if individual tasks are selected, excluding the summer DIY activity)

Materials required

- Forecasting fact-busters film
- Forecasting fact-busters slides
- Forecast cards (pages 7 – 8)
- Equipment, clothes, newspaper cuttings, online weather reports and images to support the session introduction (use printed images if physical objects are unavailable)
- Pens and paper
- YouTube or other media examples of reporting news and weather

Learning objectives

This lesson will enable pupils to:

- Understand the different ways in which we can make and communicate predictions about the weather
- Explore and develop the skills needed to tell weather stories
- Identify real and fake weather stories to understand the importance of trustworthy sources

Curriculum links

- English literacy and language – written and verbal communication
- Science/sciences and technology – prediction and evidence
- Geography/social studies/the world around us – observation, data collection and communicating data
- Mathematics and numeracy – probability and percentages
- Art and design/expressive arts – storytelling

Activity steps

01

To start the lesson, introduce your class to weather and reporting by setting up a carousel activity with four separate stations as follows:

- Station 1 - meteorological equipment e.g. wind vane, thermometer, barometer
- Station 2 – weather clothes e.g. umbrella, rain coat, sun cream, scarf
- Station 3 – weather forecasts e.g. online weather reports, newspaper cuttings, YouTube clips
- Station 4 – weather conditions e.g. descriptions of wind, heatwaves, snow

Once groups have explored each station, bring pupils' attention back to the front and ask the class:

- What do they think these objects/images are for? (Steer discussion towards weather predictions)
- Why is predicting the weather important?
- Where do we see or hear weather forecasts? (Steer discussion towards weather forecasts on TV, online, in the local paper)

15 minutes

Groupwork

Forecasting fact-busters film

Slides 2 – 3

Activity steps

- How can the weather forecasts we read or hear help us make choices? Did it help you make some choices today? (E.g. it may have helped them decide what to wear that day, whether to pack an umbrella for school, whether to get a lift or walk, etc.)
- Do you trust the information in weather forecasts? What's the reason for your answer?
- Why might a news story be published that's untrue or that is based on truth but is exaggerated? (E.g. to make a story feel more exciting and dramatic, to get lots of people to read that article). Could this also be true for weather strories we see?

Explain that weather forecasting allows meteorologists to give us information to help make choices and prepare for different weather conditions, however this is only the case if the forecasts are reported accurately. Even if a forecast or article seems like it's using real facts, some sources will publish articles that are 'stretching the truth', or sometimes even untrue, to get more people reading the story. Illustrate this point by playing the forecasting fact-busters film.

Ask pupils what the consequence of this can be, using the points raised in the film as inspiration (e.g. if people are wrongly informed or given a 'false picture' of what the weather might be like, they may not know the right way to prepare themselves). Also consider the impact of people reading stories that they think are from an authoritative source, but are in fact from another less trustworthy source. This means that people might not believe trustworthy organisations when they publish real weather warnings.

Activity steps

02

Divide the class into groups of three. Give each group a forecast card (found on pages 7 – 8) containing a piece of weather information that they must use to tell a story.

Tell each team to wear the 'hat' of a different outlet, thinking about how the story might be told differently from a variety of sources. You can show the groups examples of Met Office online forecasts, tabloid newspapers, social media websites, CBBC Newsround, regional TV and national TV that you find online to give them inspiration. You may like to allocate these channels to specific groups or ask a pupil from each group to select one via a 'lucky dip'.

Encourage the class to familiarise themselves with examples of the media outlet they have been given to understand the tone and language used. If your class has access to computers or tablets and the internet, ask pupils to explore the website for their selected media channel. If not, you can print and prepare example articles for the class in advance of the lesson.

Ask the groups to identify and write down key features of each news source so that they can reflect this in their own weather stories, for example the tone and language used.

15 minutes

Groupwork

Slide 4

Forecasting fact-busters forecast cards

03

It is now time for the groups to have a go at making a weather report of their own which they will present to the class. They can either do this using their forecast cards or the Met Office website to find the forecast for the rest of the day. They can choose to create their report in a variety of formats depending on the facilities you have available e.g. video, presentation, written report or creative writing.

15 minutes

Groupwork

Slide 5

Activity steps

04 Invite each group to tell their weather story to the class. Observing teams must identify what information is factually true, which elements are open to interpretation and which language devices have been used to tell the story. E.g. colloquialisms such as “the weather today is set to be a scorcher!”

25 minutes

Groupwork

05 Bring the lesson to a close by asking the class to reflect on what they have learnt, returning to the questions at the start of the lesson to see how their learning has progressed.

Summarise that it is important to rely on trusted sources, especially when preparing people in the best possible way for how the weather is likely to be. Although we may trust people who share stories with us, we need to find out the source of the information to identify what we can trust.

5 minutes

Individual task

Forecast cards

Location: Edinburgh

Heavy rain and strong winds

Highest daily temperature: 12 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 9 °C

Chance of precipitation: 95%

Average wind speed: 29 mph

Gust speed: 61 mph

Location: Cardiff

Snow showers and risk of ice overnight

Highest daily temperature: 2 °C

Lowest daily temperature: -8 °C

Chance of precipitation: 40%

Average wind speed: 6 mph

Gust speed: 12 mph

Location: London

Sunny and very warm

Highest daily temperature: 36 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 23 °C

Chance of precipitation: 10%

Average wind speed: 4 mph

Gust speed: 8 mph

Location: Belfast

Heavy rain turning into hail in the afternoon

Highest daily temperature: 10 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 3 °C

Chance of precipitation: 90%

Average wind speed: 21 mph

Gust speed: 38 mph

Forecast cards

Location: Manchester

Blustery showers

Highest daily temperature: 15 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 9 °C

Chance of precipitation: 70%

Average wind speed: 18 mph

Gust speed: 29 mph

Location: Plymouth

Sunny intervals with gusty showers in the afternoon

Highest daily temperature: 15 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 10 °C

Chance of precipitation: 60%

Average wind speed: 13 mph

Gust speed: 32 mph

Location: Glasgow

Rain showers turning into sleet in the afternoon

Highest daily temperature: 5 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 2 °C

Chance of precipitation: 80%

Average wind speed: 9 mph

Gust speed: 18 mph

Location: Norwich

Strong sun, turning cloudy in the evening

Highest daily temperature: 26 °C

Lowest daily temperature: 18 °C

Chance of precipitation: 20%

Average wind speed: 10 mph

Gust speed: 16 mph