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Chapter (Lesson) 1. **Wisdom** and **Wonder**: a foundation for justice

Lesson One Intention(s):

- Students are introduced to The Redford Stories Project.
- Students reflect on their experience of relationship to the natural world.
- Students discuss the power of narrative/story to invite and shift attention and action.
- Students consider what gives them hope, and their position as inspirers/agents of change.

Lesson One Overview:

This lesson introduces students to The Redford Stories Project as a **journey of learning and discovery to connect with the natural world, ourselves and each other, and bring health and healing to our planet and communities**. The start of any journey, and any story, begins from an impulse to wonder—about what is, and about what could be. Further, expansion of human understanding and human society—across history, and across every discipline of exploration and endeavor—begins with the **curiosity to know more** about ourselves and our world, and with **our capacity for attention and observation**. How can the impulse to wonder and capacity to explore most help humanity now? As a first step of this journey, students are invited to reflect on their relationship to the natural world, inspired in part by the words and wisdom of youth activist Xiye Bastida, biologist Rachel Carson, and Joy Harjo, the first indigenous person named Poet Laureate of the United States. Students have a chance to experience a variety of ways words and images can direct and inspire our attention, and to begin to consider how they might like to explore their own experience, visions and voices toward **environmental justice and regeneration**.

Key Themes:

- Curiosity and observation
- Relationship between human being and nature
- The power of every vision and voice
- The power of a story (to inspire attention, new perspectives, action)
- The critical nature of hope and wonder/imagination

Duration: This lesson is designed for 30 mins., but can be done in 15-20, or expanded to 45-80 mins.

Lesson Components:

- Slides (in Google slides format; adaptable for educator needs/preferences)
- SUGGESTED VIDEO LINKS: “Imagine the Future,” Xiye Bastida; “Redford Center Grants - open call”; “Floating Gardens of Bangladesh”
- WRITING/REFLECTION: “Hope”; “Remember,” Joy Harjo
- Resources, activities and extension ideas (see end of lesson)

Materials:

- Educators: Lesson PDF, access to online media (for video viewing), slide deck (customizable)
- Students: pencil/pen and paper

Connections (see extensions/resources and standards below; full standards for this project [here](#)):

Justice; Environment; Film; Reading/Writing; History; STEM
Mini-challenge (can be used as a way of assignment/assessment)
Further Reading; Watching; Exercises

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Slide 3

An Initial Offering: An Introduction to The Redford Stories Project

As an introduction to [The Redford Stories Project](#), you might invite a student to read Robert Redford's quote (on slide 3 and below) and share a version of the following to students (also on slide 4):

"It's time to hand the reins to our youth and encourage them to become the designers of their future. Young people have the **optimism, energy, and fresh perspective** we need to meet our environmental challenges head-on. We must honor their efforts and support them as leaders." – Robert Redford

*If you would like to include background on The Redford Center, or additional media content, please see the end of the lesson. Also, some students have enjoyed knowing that Robert Redford, a film actor and director, has appeared in and made more than **70 films**, including *Pete's Dragon*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Captain America: the Winter Soldier*, *All the President's Men*, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, and many more.

Slide 4

We have an opportunity to participate in a project called **The Redford Stories Project**, with people all over the country. This project is about exploring the world in new ways; and discovering different ways of creating and sharing stories that **support a healthy planet and healthy people and build new kinds of community**.

The Redford Center was started by Robert Redford, and his son, James Redford, in order to create stories, films and projects that help inspire people to take new action to **protect and heal** the nature world and human communities. It gives us a chance to experience and consider the impact of different ways of telling stories, think about how we participate in local/global communities and who gets to speak for a "community", create different kinds of projects, tell our own stories and be affected by other people's, and make our own short films.

There is no right way of doing anything that is part of this project. No two people will have the same experience or ideas, which is what makes it so exciting. **Each person's point of view is equally important; and equally needed.**"

Slide 5

Xiye Bastida, "Imagine the Future"

Around the planet, young people are raising their **visions, voices, creativity, and inspirations** for a more just and healthy planet. We can look out into the world and see many, many issues that need our care and attention – we will look specifically at many of them, and each of us probably can think of so many more. As we think about building a more just, inclusive, healthy, and beautiful world, we need to consider what **tools** are available to us, and how we can **make decisions** that have the **best possible impacts** (results).

It's possible you've heard of Greta Thunberg, who has been very prominent in drawing the attention of the world to what is happening to nature and **"the climate"** (we will think about this term). However, millions of young people are acting to impact the ways we treat the Earth and each other. In fact, the United Nations (UN) reports that right now, there are **more than 1.8 billion people** on the planet who are [between ages 10-24](#) – that is a lot of influence; and young people have the power of imagination on their side. Someone also calling for an unleashing of human imagination (particularly among young people) is **Xiye Bastida**, who identifies as an American climate activist and member of the indigenous Mexican Otomi-Toltec nation.

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Here's a little bit of Xiye's story:

"I was born in a small town called San Pedro Tultepec, outside Toluca, a city in the basin that neighbors Mexico City. Between 2011 and 2013, my town experienced the worst drought in Mexico in seventy years. Then in 2015 we were hit by heavy rainfall that resulted in flooding, affecting worst the poor communities by the Lerma River. This was the first time I saw the effects of our climate crisis and how unjust they are...The climate crisis can feel really complicated and overwhelming at times....But here's what I've learned: *You don't have to know the details of the science to be part of the solution*...Youth have come to understand that we have to be **the communicators** of science, facts, policy, solutions, and hope through language that reaches the general public. We have to use every tool at our disposal, from traditional media to memes, **to tell the world what we know and what matters to us.**"

(Xiye Bastida, essay included in Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson, *All We Can Save*, p.3-4)

Slide 6

Show Xiye Bastida's short video, "[Imagine the Future](#)" (3:04 mins; *you will watch this twice)
(you can also provide the YouTube link to this video to students in advance of class)

Slide 7

Give students an opportunity to reflect on this video together. You might ask questions like the following (* If you are using online technology like Zoom or Google Classroom, you can also invite students to chat some of their reflections/answers to allow more people to participate in the conversation as you ask).

- Reflections on this video?
 - A moment that particularly stayed with you? Surprised you?
- How might you describe her point of view in this video?
 - What kind of attitude does she present?
- What message are you left with for yourself?
- What is "the greatest challenge of our lives" in your opinion?
 - How does Xiye explain the challenge as she sees it?
 - What do we do when there is a challenge?
- Xiye says we need to meet the time we live in with "stubborn optimism"?
 - How do we understand the meaning of "stubborn"?
 - How do we understand the meaning of "optimism"?
 - Why put these two words together?
- When we think about the "great challenges" of our lives, who are the people working together to overcome/transcend these challenges? And how?



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Deepening Observation and Noticing

After students have had an opportunity to reflect on the first viewing of Xiye's video, invite them to watch the video again, this time with some particular questions in mind (also on slide 7):

- How does Xiye tell the story she wants to tell in this video?
 - How is Xiye framed in her video?
- What elements does she include that most stand out to you?
 - For example, images, her voices, music/sound, moving images?
- Do you notice any images that feel similar to things you notice in your own community?
- Can you notice when the focus is on big ideas, and when it's on small details?
 - For example, the sky view, and then the kelp bed...
- What does Xiye hope people will be inspired to do?

If in a **Science/STEM** class, you might also incorporate some of the following questions:

- What are 3 natural systems or elements that you can notice in Xiye's video?
- What are 4 (or more) ecological issues that Xiye speaks about or that are shown?
- What patterns do you notice in this video? (humans, weather, humans-environment....)
 - What future patterns are being addressed and altered?

*If in a **History** class, you might also incorporate some of the following questions:

- What kinds of historical decisions/actions have led to the need for this kind of video?
- What periods of history is this video addressing?
- What/whose points of view are included/not included in the conversation?

Slide 8

In a 4-part series called *Adaptation*, researcher and filmmaker Alizé Carrère explores how people are adapting to the impacts of climate change in four communities around the world. The first episode, "[Floating Gardens of Bangladesh](#)," shows how people in this South Asian country have already reimagined a new way of living in a place deeply impacted by climate crisis-related flooding. Watch this clip from the film (start at 8:30).

Adaptation has the power to inspire hope because it reveals how even in seemingly dire circumstances, people are resilient and determined to find solutions.

Consider the following questions:

- What are some of the biggest environmental challenges in your own communities?
- What kinds of adaptations to these challenges can you imagine?
- OR What solutions can you imagine for your own community?

Slide 9

The Stories Project Challenge (preview) (video)

The images on slide 8, and the video linked [HERE](#) feature just some of the past/current film projects created and/or supported by The Redford Center. Clips and trailers from many of these films are included in The Stories Project, and will give inspiration to consider how we want to create stories of our own.

A big goal of the Stories Project is to encourage all of you to tell your own environmental stories in film, and

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there are challenge activities at the end of each lesson meant to help prepare you for this. Don't worry if you've never made a film before! We will work through activities that will take you through the steps you need to tell your story. A question for further consideration: **What's the relationship between storytelling and social change?**

Slide 10

★ Challenge Prep 1: Imagining Is The First Step

Vision Board Exercise

Xiye Bastida says "Imaging is the first step." Visualization is a technique that uses visual imagery to communicate ideas that may not exist yet. It's a way of communicating the visual picture of what we imagine so that we can share it with others. Many storytellers create vision boards to share with their creative teams. In this exercise, students will create a vision board that will demonstrate their vision for the future of their community.

Encourage students to think back to the questions from the previous learning:

- What are some of the biggest environmental challenges in your communities?
- What kinds of adaptations to these challenges can you imagine?
- What solutions can you imagine for your community?

Ask them to reflect on their answers to those questions, then imagine what the future would look like if their community adapted the solutions they suggested.

- What would the world look like if we worked together to meet the moment of the climate crisis and implemented more sustainable lifestyles and developed harmonious relationships with nature?
- What does that world look like?
- What does it feel like?

Students will create vision boards for the future they imagine. They can be made on a digital software or a material arts project. They can use existing images on the internet, cut out pictures/words from magazines, or draw the ideas they imagine.

****Please share your students' vision boards with stories@redfordcenter.org if you would like to! We would love to see your visions of the future.****

Further Connections: Literacy and Writing – Joy Harjo's poem, "[Remember](#)"

Joy Harjo is the current Poet Laureate of the United States, and the first indigenous person appointed as Poet Laureate. Her poem, "Remember," is provided as a link to text/audio, and provides a possible resource to bridge between Lesson 1 and Lesson 2.

You might explore the way Xiye Bastida emphasizes the future/imagination, while Joy Harjo writes about the importance and power of how we use our memory and "remember" our connection to the sky, sunrise, moonlight, trees, land – deeper and older even than any other history we carry.

Inspired by Joy's poem, you might have students write a poem of their own, without any particular structure (free verse), and maybe starting with the line below (if students would like a starting line to

Slide 10 (A first line and a few words you might use in a poem, inspired by Joy Harjo)

When I listen to the sky...

hush, motion, stories, alive, (color)

(*color in parenthesis means choose a color)

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Additional Activity Option/Further Connections: [Science/STEM](#)

[Climate Bingo](#) (in English and Spanish, and a version for younger students)

The above link will take you to Google Slides with “Climate Change and Youth Activism” bingo. This is intended as a playful way to get students working together, and can be played with the intention to find an answer for every square, or as many answers as possible.

You can make a copy and edit the game to be your own in any way that you would like, or try it as is. If you are using Zoom or Google Classroom for teaching, you can share a link to the game sheet directly with students, or work on the game as a class.

Many themes and terms that appear on the sheet may not yet be familiar, and might be good avenues for exploration and conversation. Themes and terms included also will appear in upcoming lessons.

What exactly do we mean when we talk about “climate” and “climate change”?

“Climate” – Climate is sometimes mistaken for weather. But climate is different from weather because it is measured over a long period of time, whereas weather can change from day to day, or from year to year. The climate of an area includes seasonal temperature and rainfall averages, and wind patterns. Different places have different climates.

“Climate change” – occurs when long-term weather patterns are altered — for example, through human activity. “Global warming” is one measure of climate change, and is a rise in the average global temperature. ([NASA](#))

How does climate change happen?

Find videos/other content that can help offer students accessible information. For example:

- We have released so much carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that Earth’s atmosphere is

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now like a thick, [heat-trapping blanket](#).

- By disrupting the atmospheric balance that keeps the climate stable, we are now seeing extreme effects around the globe.
- It's like a thermostat that's gone haywire — it just doesn't work the way it should.
- The result: [the climate changes](#), and it gets warmer.
 - Extreme weather events also become more common.
- Since 1900, the global average temperature has risen by 0.7 degrees Celsius, and the northern hemisphere is substantially warmer than at any point during the past 1,000 years.

Global Perspective on Climate Change

*Read more from the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC). Established by the UN, the IPCC assesses the scientific and socio-economic information relevant to climate change. The IPCC also looks at potential impacts of climate change, and options for slowing it down or adapting to it.

Extensions

The Redford Center

Brief Overview and Purpose:

Co-founded in 2005 by Robert Redford and his son James Redford, The Redford Center uses impact-driven film and media to accelerate environmental and climate justice, solutions and repair. We produce, fund and fiscally sponsor a diverse portfolio of projects that aim to balance out the pervasive, alarmist environmental narrative with stories that feature **individuals, communities and organizations taking action to protect and restore the planet.**

The Redford Center website: <https://redfordcenter.org>

Hope for the Future, Robert Redford: https://youtu.be/hX0q_O4l1RQ

The Redford Center Trailer: <https://youtu.be/UITEb3N3iTc>



Resources

- Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*
- Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*

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- Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
- Joy Harjo, *How We Become Human: New and Selected Poems 1975-2001*.
- Rachel Kaza, *Mindfully Green*
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*
- Anuradha Rao, *One Earth: People of Color Protecting Our Planet*

Resources for younger students:

Laurie Lawlor and Laura Beingessner, *Rachel Carson and Her Book that Changed the World*

Suggested Standards: Language Arts and History/Social Studies

This lesson gives students multiple opportunities to engage with **language, images and text**, with particular focus on how specific words and images contribute to meaning, tone and message. Students also have a chance to reflect on their own experience and point of view in **conversation and writing**.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Suggested Standards: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)

Throughout this lesson students are encouraged to understand the primacy of **observation**, and the need to attend closely to **patterns and relationships**, and to be able to envision **the impact of actions**.

- Patterns and relationships
 - Precision and depth in observation
 - Inference and probability
-

Suggested Standards: NGSS/Environment

Students are encouraged to make connections between the health of natural systems and the health of human beings and human communities. In addition, phenomena and change may be observable at one scale and not another, or may require a different way of inquiry and attention to detect and understand.

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- Health of human lives and health of natural systems
- Flow of energy and matter at the scale of the entire planet
- Exchange of matter between natural systems and human societies affects long-term functioning of both
- Phenomena that can be observed at one scale may not be noticed/observable at another scale
- Systems interact with other systems
- Stability might be disturbed either by sudden events or gradual changes that accumulate over time.

Suggested Connections: Social Justice

The integration of perspectives and voices in this lesson is intended to encourage greater appreciation for the depth of **one's own identity**, and **respectful curiosity about others' lived experience**.

Identity. Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.

Diversity. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.

Suggested Connections: Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Components of this lesson are meant to support students' sense of **confidence and agency**, as well as their social-awareness and sense for relationships; as well as how much relationships need tending, both with **respect** to our relationship with the natural world and each other.

- Self-awareness (confidence, self-efficacy)
- Social-awareness (perspective-taking, appreciating diversity, respect for others)
- Social skills (communication, relationship building)
- Responsible decision-making (evaluating, reflecting)

Suggested Connections: UN Sustainability Goals

(*Click the images to go to pages on the UN's website that detail the goals and intentions behind each.)

