

June: World Environment Day



John Burningham's illustration of Article 13 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 12

Children have a right to say what they think should happen when decisions are being made that affect them – that is, children's voices should be heard.

Article 13

Children have the right to get and share information.

Article 29

Education should include the development of respect for the natural environment.

Key words

Helping	Rights	Respect
Learning	Listening	Voice
Responsibility	Safety	

Resources

- Sunhats and/or towels and/or buckets and spades for 10+ children
- A beach ball
- A tray and four plastic glasses
- A rug on a raised area at the back of the stage to represent the hotel
- A cymbal

Illustrations

You will need, if possible, to display or project a large copy of the above picture (John Burningham's illustration of Right No. 13)

Pupil participation

10+ children playing Ann and her family plus other holidaymakers on the beach and a waiter. Children should go barefoot, roll up trousers and so on.

All the children watching the assembly can represent 'the sea'. You could rehearse a Mexican wave and a 'whooshing' noise to be made when indicated by the narrator.

Opening

What is happening in this picture?

[Elicit that the boy is trying to tell his father that something important is happening, but his father isn't listening.]

Today we are going to see a short play about a little girl who tried to tell the grown ups around her when something important was happening.

Ann was 8 years old and her brother Jack was 5 when they went on holiday with their parents. There could have been a very sad ending to their story if it had not been for something Ann had learned at school.

For Christmas 2004, Ann and her brother Jack went on holiday to Thailand. They stayed in a lovely hotel right by the sea. On Christmas Day they opened their presents on the beach. It was perfect.

On Boxing Day, they went to the beach again and settled down near the gently lapping sea.

[Ann, Jack and their parents enter, followed by more children, acting as families and parents, all dressed in sun hats, some with towels under their arms. They mime laying towels out for sunbathing, making sandcastles, throwing a beach ball, paddling and so on.]

The sun was beating down and the palm trees were swaying in the breeze. Ann and Jack started making sandcastles. A waiter from the hotel brought them some ice cold drinks.

[Waiter brings drinks. At this point the narrator stops talking and the children start talking, shouting and laughing for 30 seconds until ...]

Suddenly, everyone on the beach went quiet and looked out at the sea.

[Everyone on the beach stands up and starts looking out to sea, shading their eyes.]

Or where the sea used to be. The beach was now enormous and the sea could hardly be seen. The beach was full of fish and crabs that had been left behind on the sea bed. People stopped and looked at the flapping fish and scuttling crabs.

Holidaymaker 1

Hey! Look at this fish. Shall we take it into the hotel for dinner?!

Ann was as puzzled as the others until she remembered a documentary she had seen.

Ann

Tsunami! Tsunami! We have to get off the beach. It's a tsunami! Mum! Mum! Come back. We've got to get off the beach!

Narrator

Ann's mother and father looked at each other and at their frantic daughter. Her father spoke to another man nearby and they laughed. Ann snatched up her brother Jack and started to carry him up the beach. He struggled in her arms. *[Actors act out what the narrator describes]*

Ann

We have to get away. We don't have much time.

Narrator

By this time people could see, far off, that the sea was rising up.

Ann

The wave will kill us! Please, let's all go now.

Narrator

Everyone was so confused. What was happening on their perfect holiday beach? But now, not so far away, they could see the sea getting bigger and bigger.

Suddenly panic broke out. People turned and ran up the beach. Everyone ran to the highest place, the top floor of the hotel. They were only just in time.

[People start to run towards the rug on the raised area at the back of the stage the mat.]

[Indicate for the children in the audience to perform a Mexican wave with a huge 'whooshing' sound. The narrator could bang a cymbal to indicate for them to stop]

The giant wave crashed against the hotel, swept past and then back again, carrying trees, beach chairs, rocks and boats. Everyone started to go back downstairs.

Ann

Wait! There may be another wave. We have to wait. It may be bigger than the first.

Narrator

This time people listened to her. Some even asked her questions. Half an hour later a bigger wave struck. For the next two hours more waves came, all bigger than the first. This beach, where Ann gave the warning, was one of the few places hit by the tsunami where no-one was killed.

Conclusion

The adults nearly didn't listen to Ann, because she was only eight years old. Yet, she knew something nobody else did.

Do you think there's a lesson we could all learn from this true story? What is it?

Today is World Environment Day. This day reminds us of the bigger picture, the world environment. The tsunami was a natural disaster caused by an earthquake. No-one could have prevented the underwater earthquake. But as we have seen, it helps if you know what to do in an emergency.

We all have a responsibility to learn more about how to protect our environment and ourselves, so that we and our families can be safe.

Follow-up work

This story, called *The Christmas Angel* appears in the book *Higher Ground*, published by Chrysalis Children's Books. For the full story and classroom activities, visit:

www.unicef.org/uk/tz/resources/resource

(The Christmas Angel story)

www.unicef.org/uk/tz/resources/resource

(activities to go with the tsunami stories)

You can find out more about World Environment Day from:

www.un.org/depts/dhl/environment