

Lesson concept (CLIL): „Forest Detectives – What happened to the forest?“

Primary school, grade 4, approx. 45 minutes | General studies, bilingual (CLIL)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our advising teacher, Svetlana Zenker [Subject consultant for English in primary schools in Saxony], for her valuable guidance, feedback and support throughout the development of this lesson concept. We would also like to thank Anke Griewank [Climate Education Coordinator, Saxony State Office for Schools and Education] for providing contact to the guidance teacher.

1. Quick-reference sheet with the key facts

Lesson topic	„Forest Detectives – What happened to the forest?“ (CLIL)
Subject	General studies (bilingual, CLIL)
Grade / school type	Grade 4, primary school
Time frame	approx. 45 minutes
Curriculum reference Germany (Saxony)	General studies: learning area 3 "Encounters with plants and animals" and learning area 4 "Encounters with phenomena of inanimate nature" (Saxony primary school curriculum for General Studies, 2004/2009/2019). English: learning area "Animals" (grades 3/4) together with the didactic principle of developing listening comprehension through stories (Saxony primary school curriculum for English, 2004/2019). As a CLIL lesson, it also realises the cross-curricular teaching principle, anchored as a guiding principle in both curricula, since the same lesson can be taught either as General Studies or as English.
Curriculum reference Czech Republic	Education are: People and Their Worlds (Člověk a jeho svět), thematic unit Diversity of Nature (Rozmanitost přírody) Cross-curricular theme: Sustainable Environment (Udržitelné prostředí) RVP 2025 (Czech Framework Curriculum for Elementary Education) CLIL reflect the curriculum's emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and multilingualism
Lesson objective (short form)	Content: The children understand that forests can change as a result of events such as fires and can recover. Language: The children understand key English vocabulary and a simple story in English on the topic.
Social forms	Plenary session, individual/partner work during the creative phase
Central method	CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning): storytelling in English using flashcards, story cards and PowerPoint

Core materials	Flashcards (vocabulary), story cards ('Forest Story', A–D), materials for the creative phase
Language of teaching	Approx. 90% English; the focus is on the children's overall understanding of the content, not on their ability to speak without making mistakes

2. Curriculum relevance

Germany (Saxony)

This lesson can be located in two curricula at once, which reflects the cross-curricular nature of CLIL teaching. It belongs to learning area 3, "Encounters with plants and animals", of the Saxon primary school curriculum for General Studies. It pursues the goal of getting to know the forest as a living community. In addition, it can be assigned to learning area 4, "Encounters with phenomena of inanimate nature", where the focus is on learning about the influence of fire on human life.

At the same time, the lesson draws on the Saxon primary school curriculum for English, in particular the learning area "Animals" (grades 3/4) and the general didactic principle that listening comprehension is developed especially through stories, which allow children to build inner images even without understanding every word.

The combination of both subjects in a single lesson is no coincidence, but rather a recognised curricular principle in its own right: the Saxon primary school curriculum describes cross-curricular work as a consistent didactic principle that runs through all subjects, and distinguishes this from subject-integrated teaching, which requires a specific cross-curricular theme. As a bilingual lesson delivered within the CLIL framework, this teaching unit puts precisely this principle into practice: the subject content (forest ecology) and the foreign language (English) are explored together, without the foreign language itself becoming a separate subject of study.

Czech Republic

The lesson aligns with the revised Czech National Curriculum for Primary Education (RVP ZV), particularly within the educational area People and Their World (Člověk a jeho svět). It supports the thematic area Diversity of Nature (Rozmanitost přírody) by encouraging pupils to observe natural processes, recognise changes in the environment, and understand relationships between living organisms and their surroundings.

The activities promote inquiry-based learning through observation, comparison, asking questions, and drawing conclusions from real-world evidence, including satellite images. They also contribute to the development of digital competence, as pupils work with visual data to investigate environmental change.

In addition, the lesson supports the cross-curricular theme Sustainable Environment (Udržitelné prostředí) by fostering environmental awareness, understanding of ecosystem dynamics, and responsible attitudes towards nature.

Although CLIL is not explicitly prescribed in the Czech National Curriculum, its principles closely reflect the curriculum's emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and multilingualism. The revised RVP encourages schools to connect learning across educational areas and to develop pupils' ability to use languages in meaningful and authentic contexts. By integrating environmental science with English language learning, the lesson enables pupils to acquire subject knowledge while simultaneously developing communication skills, subject-specific vocabulary, and digital competence through the interpretation of authentic satellite imagery.

3. Subject-matter analysis

3.1 Forest in transition: forest fire and regeneration

Forests are dynamic ecosystems that are continually changed by natural disturbances such as periods of drought and fires. Prolonged dryness reduces the moisture in the soil and vegetation, thereby increasing the flammability of organic material. Under these conditions, a single spark – whether caused by lightning or human activity – can trigger a forest fire that spreads quickly through dry undergrowth and into the tree canopy.

After a fire, the ecosystem changes fundamentally: trees die or burn, the soil loses nutrients and its capacity to absorb water, and the protective canopy cover disappears. However, this is not final destruction but a disturbance followed by a process of regeneration: resilient pioneer plants settle first, seeds are carried in by wind and animals, and the soil slowly stabilises again. In a more advanced phase, young trees grow up, water can seep in more easily again, and the ecosystem gradually approaches a new equilibrium. This cycle of disturbance and regeneration is a central principle of forest ecology and forms the subject-matter basis of the lesson.

3.2 CLIL as a methodological and linguistic basis

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) refers to a teaching approach in which a subject – in this case, general studies – is taught partly or entirely in a foreign language. The focus is on the subject content; the foreign language serves as a medium of instruction, not as the actual subject being learnt. Key principles include a high proportion of comprehensible language input supported by images and activities, and a focus on understanding the content rather than assessing linguistic accuracy.

In practical terms, this means that around 90 per cent of this lesson will be conducted in English. What matters is not the children's active, error-free language production, but their overall understanding of the content, the development of contextual understanding, and their interest in the topic.

3.3 Differentiation

This lesson offers two differentiation options, between which the teacher can choose depending on the class's ability level – one qualitative (easy level) and one quantitative (intermediate level):

- Easy level: Narrative text of the tree stump story (see Appendix 7.3) in conjunction with the PowerPoint presentation of the forest story (see Appendix 7.4).
- Intermediate level: 'Forest Story' story cards (see Appendix 7.2) in conjunction with the PowerPoint presentation for the entire lesson (see Appendix 7.6) and the flashcards (see Appendix 7.6, slide 2-4).

The teacher selects the appropriate level for their class independently.

4. Learning objectives

Knowledge acquisition (content): The pupils gain an insight into the damage caused to and changes in forests as a result of fires.

Language-related objective: Pupils understand key English vocabulary relating to the topic of forests and can match these words to pictures; they develop initial receptive listening comprehension skills in relation to a simple narrative in English.

Skills development (methodological skills): Pupils arrange story cards in a logical order based on pictures and simple English sentences.

Values-based learning: Pupils appreciate the value of the forest to nature.

5. Lesson sequence

Phase	Time	Procedure / content	Material
1. Introduction to key vocabulary	15 mins	Introduction of around 10 key vocabulary words using flashcards (word, picture, and, where appropriate, pronunciation by the teacher). If desired, the entire lesson can be supported by a PowerPoint presentation. In the first round of introduction, only the word is said and the matching picture card is shown. To check their understanding, the teacher asks: ‘What does it mean in German/Czech?’ In the second round of introduction, the corresponding word card is also shown, once the children already know how the word is pronounced. The teacher can ask the questions in English and the children can answer in their mother tongue (German or Czech). The flashcards can be displayed in printed form, on a screen or using a projector.	Flashcards (see Appendix 7.6, slide 2-4) Optional: PowerPoint presentation for the whole lesson (see Appendix 7.6) EVOCATION
2. Preparing for the storytelling phase	5 mins	The children are given story cards (each containing around three sentences per card), which provide the structure for the ‘Forest Story’. A quick look at the cards/pictures, followed by initial guesses as to the order of the story (in English or German/Czech).	Story Cards A–D (see Appendix 7.2) UNDERSTANDING OF MEANING
4. Storytelling in English	15 mins	The teacher tells the ‘Forest Story’ using simple, clear English sentences, optionally supported by a PowerPoint presentation with images for each stage (A–D). The visual aids facilitate an overall understanding, even without a full grasp of the words. Key message: ‘The forest can change. The forest can heal.’	Story Cards A–D (see Appendix 7.2) Narrative text of the tree stump story (A–D) (see Appendix 7.3) Optional: PowerPoint presentation of forest story (see Appendix 7.4)

5. Creative final phase	10 mins	Children express their ideas about the future of the forest creatively by drawing a picture.	Drawing card 14x14 cm (see Appendix 7.5)
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REFLECTION

6. References

Saxon State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs: Primary School Curriculum, General Studies (2004/2009/2019 editions). <https://www.schulportal.sachsen.de/lplandb/lehrplan/80>.

Saxon State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs: Primary School Curriculum, English (2004/2009/2019 editions). <https://www.schulportal.sachsen.de/lplandb/lehrplan/91>.

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge University Press. https://assets.cambridge.org/97805211/30219/excerpt/9780521130219_excerpt.pdf.

7. Appendix

7.1 Vocabulary list (flashcards)

English	German	Czech
tree stump	der Baumstumpf	pařez
plant	die Pflanze	rostlina
ground	der Boden	země
fire	das Feuer	ohněň
forest	der Wald	les
spread	ausbreiten	rozšířit se
smoke	der Rauch	kouř
burnt soil	die verbrannte Erde	Spálená půda

empty	leer	prázdný
dry	trocken	suchý

7.2 Story Cards: „Forest Story“ (A–D)

A 2021



I am a tree stump in a healthy forest area.
Tall trees stand around me, and green grass and plants cover the ground.
The forest is peaceful and full of life.

B 2022



Then something dangerous happened.
A fire spread through the forest and destroyed many trees and plants.
I can see smoke, burnt soil and plants.

C 2023



After the fire, the forest looked completely different.
Around me, many trees were gone and the ground looked empty and dry.
Only a few plants were still growing.

D 2024



I am the same tree stump, but now the forest is beginning to recover.
New plants, grass and small trees are all around me.
Nature is coming back after the fire.

7.3 Narrative text of the tree stump story (A–D)

Slide A:

In 2021 you can see a healthy, happy forest full of life.
Beautiful butterflies fly from flower to flower.
There are many colorful flowers everywhere.
The grass is soft and green.
The trees are tall and green.
The forest is a wonderful home for many animals and plants.

Slide B:

But then, in 2022, something terrible happened.
There was no rain for a long time. The weather became very hot.
Then a big fire broke out.
The flames destroyed many trees.
The animals had to leave their homes and search for a safe place.
After the fire, the forest was quiet and empty.
The ground was black.

Slide C:

In 2023, the forest slowly began to recover.

A few small plants started to grow again.

But there were still no trees.

The ground was still black.

Little by little, the forest started to become green again.

Slide D:

In 2024, the forest looked green again.

Green grass covered the ground.

Some small trees started to grow.

Nature was slowly coming back.

Let's protect our forest and nature!

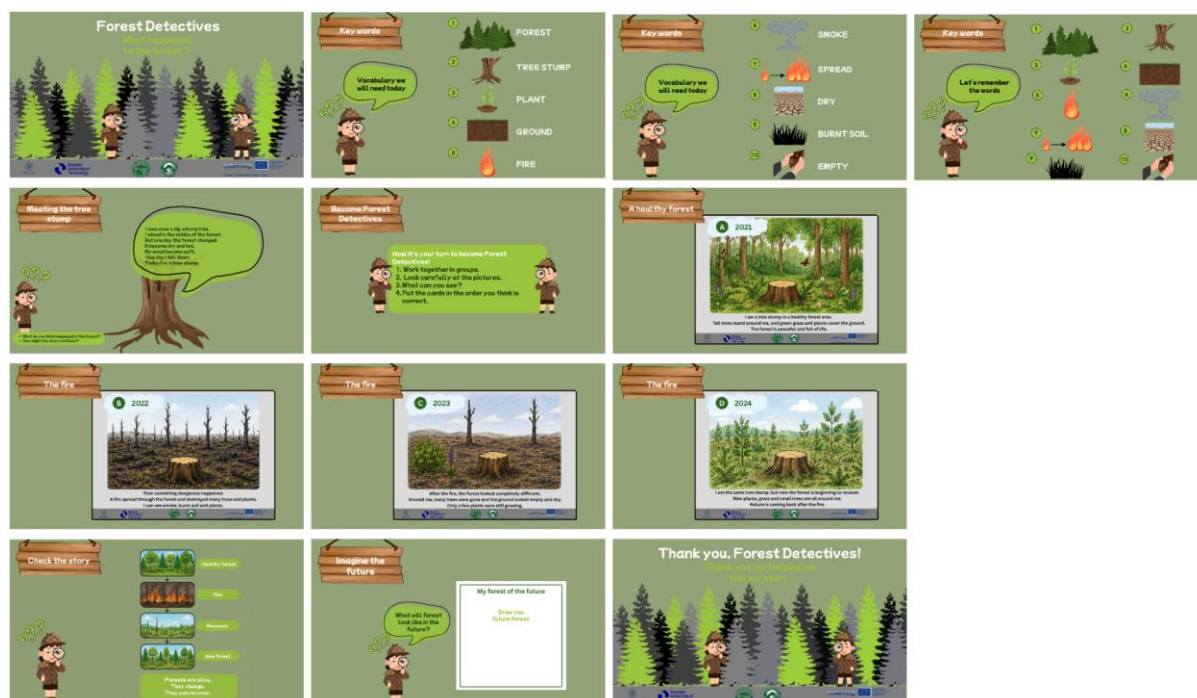
7.4 PowerPoint presentation of forest story



7.5 Reflection and creative phase

My forest of the future

7.6 PowerPoint presentation for the whole lesson



8. Checklist

1. Before lesson

☐ Optional: check that the PowerPoint presentation of the Forest Story (see appendix 7.3) is ready to use

2. Materials to print and/or cut

☐ Flashcards with vocabulary (see appendix 7.6, slide 2-4) – *does not need to be printed if a projector/screen is used*

☐ Story Cards A–D for the Forest Story (see appendix 7.2)

☐ 14×14 cm drawing cards one per child (see appendix 7.5)

3. Materials to bring / set up in the room

☐ Optional: Projector and computer/laptop for the PowerPoint presentation

☐ Pens, pencils, colouring materials for the creative phase

9. Licence

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10. Funding

This work was funded by the project “Cross-border forest monitoring in the Bohemian Switzerland/Saxon Switzerland National Park” (TransForMon, 100736674) under the INTERREG Saxony–Czech Republic 2021–2027 programme, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project runs from 20 May 2024 to 31 December 2027, with ERDF funding of 561,300.33€.

Project partners:

- Lead partner: Univerzita Karlova, Department of Applied Geoinformatics and Cartography, doc. RNDr. Lucie Kupková, Ph.D.
- Dresden University of Technology, Junior Professorship in Geosensor Systems, Prof. Dr. Anette Eltner
- ČR Správa Národního parku České Švýcarsko (Czech Switzerland National Park Authority)
- Staatsbetrieb Sachsenforst (Saxon Switzerland National Park Authority)