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This book is dedicated to my wife Jackie and our dear friend and colleague Kevin Robinson who died in November 2009. I hope Kevin's spirit lives on in this book and that he would have approved of the ideals it promotes.

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Introduction

In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future.
The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.

Eric Hoffer

I remember it like yesterday. It was my first ever interview for a deputy headship and I braced myself for the first question. It certainly wasn't what I expected: 'A hymn, a prayer and a telling off – is this an accurate description of a school assembly?' I can't remember how I answered but it certainly made me think, and over thirty years later I am still thinking about it.

If a school assembly lasts twenty minutes then a child spends 63 hours a year in assembly and that equates to over ten school days of six hours each. This means that during their primary school years a child will spend 443 hours or 70 days in assembly and possibly a further 316 hours or 52 days during the secondary years. This can be either time that is simply lost and forgotten or hours that can be used to make a difference – to create confident individuals and responsible, deep-thinking citizens for the future.

Growing up in the twenty-first century can seem very complex and there are many things that seriously worry young people – global warming, depleted natural resources and how we can all live together harmoniously in a rapidly changing world. The generation of children currently passing through our schools will be the ones to resolve these issues for us. This will be achieved partly through the skills and knowledge they gather and partly through the development of an emotional and spiritual intelligence that will enable them to become good citizens who do the right things at the right time. This is what I have aimed to do

in this book. The materials are aimed predominantly at school leaders and teachers in Key Stages 2 and 3 (ages 7–14). The photographs and activities suggested can be used to enhance learning in classrooms.

Eric Hoffer's comment speaks of a time of 'drastic change', and the twenty-first century has already brought considerable change with certainly more to come. Therefore, the premise behind this book is that more than ever children need to be equipped to think deeply and make appropriate choices about what is right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly.

Many of the assemblies build from ideas in my previous book, *Inspirational Teachers Inspirational Learners* (2011). In turn, I hope the suggestions equip you to lead inspirational assemblies that pass the three generations test: the children remember them in the short term; they still remember them when they become parents; and finally they are able to tell their grandchildren about them.

The book is laid out in two parts:

- **Part I: Our World in the Twenty-First Century** aims to help children to become responsible global citizens who will help to change the world for the better.
- **Part II: Creating Responsible Citizens in Our Schools and Communities** aims to promote a sense of aspiration and ambition

within learners and also provide ideas for how they can make a positive difference to the school and the locality.

The book also recognizes the pressures school leaders and teachers are under. Therefore the materials for each theme are presented in three ways:

- **Three Star Assemblies** ★★☆☆: These are for those moments when you think: 'Help, I've hardly any time to plan an assembly!' For these assemblies, you can simply pick up the book and read the story or account and follow the activities planned.
- **Four Star Assemblies** ★★★☆☆: These are for the occasions when you've got a bit longer to prepare. They might involve groups of children, music or film footage. Many of the themes and resources provided open up opportunities for Philosophy for Children activities in the classroom. Sometimes these could be highly worthwhile learning activities that may not be incorporated into an assembly. On other occasions the children's thinking can enhance the assemblies. Sometimes the materials could lead to a follow-up assembly (which means that many of the assemblies develop into two assemblies).
- **Five Star Assemblies** ★★★★★: These are for the occasions when you need the 'Rolls Royce' model of deep, rich and meaningful assemblies. Perhaps it is because Ofsted are about to

arrive. Again there are suggestions for how you can involve the children as described in the section above. On some occasions the Five Star Assembly can become a further follow-up assembly, and so on these occasions each assembly grows into three assemblies!

One of the concepts I have become increasingly interested in over recent years is the power of the six word story. Many of the world's largest and most successful businesses use six word stories as an advertising technique. Here are a couple of examples: 'Engineered to move the human spirit' (Mercedes Benz)' and 'We're number two. We try harder' (Avis Rent a Car).

Six words are deemed to be the smallest number of words you can use to write a complete story. Some of the assemblies and activities urge the children to use six really powerful words to describe an image or capture part of the assembly. The six word story can also be a brilliant method of introducing reflection at the end of the assembly.

Many of the assemblies are designed to incorporate a Team of Experts model. Often when you view a live factual programme on television you see a research team in the background working away on computers providing up-to-the-minute information. This approach is built into many of the assemblies. All you need to do is create a team of four or five experts who set out to find additional information relating to the assembly whilst it is taking place. This methodology increases pupil

participation and also demonstrates the speed at which we can gain information, adding to the twenty-first century feel of the assembly. However, the group may need the guidance of an adult until it becomes an accepted part of the routine.

It should be stressed that the contents of this book and Jane Hewitt's stunning images on CD Rom are designed for wide useage. They have not just been produced with the school assembly in mind. The stories, articles and pictures can be used in a variety of ways by the teacher in his or her own classroom. As suggested, they can promote deep and rich activities within 'Philosophy for Children' or promote an area of research for a small group of pupils. This in turn could lead to high quality writing opportunities across a range of genres. Equally the ideas promoted could be used to introduce a class or group to those projects which have the big emotional hook, such as:

- Is slavery confined to the past?
- How can we live harmoniously in rapidly changing communities?
- Why should we recycle?
- Who are the real super heroes who have changed our community, or changed our country or changed our world?

Eric Hoffer is correct to tell us that we live in a time of drastic change. I hope that this book does help to create learners who inherit the future and help to make the world a better place, but I also hope that you enjoy exploring the themes with the children and young people in your care.

Part I

Our World in the Twenty-First Century

Helping children to become responsible global citizens
who will help to change the world for the better.

1. The Bitter Taste of Chocolate

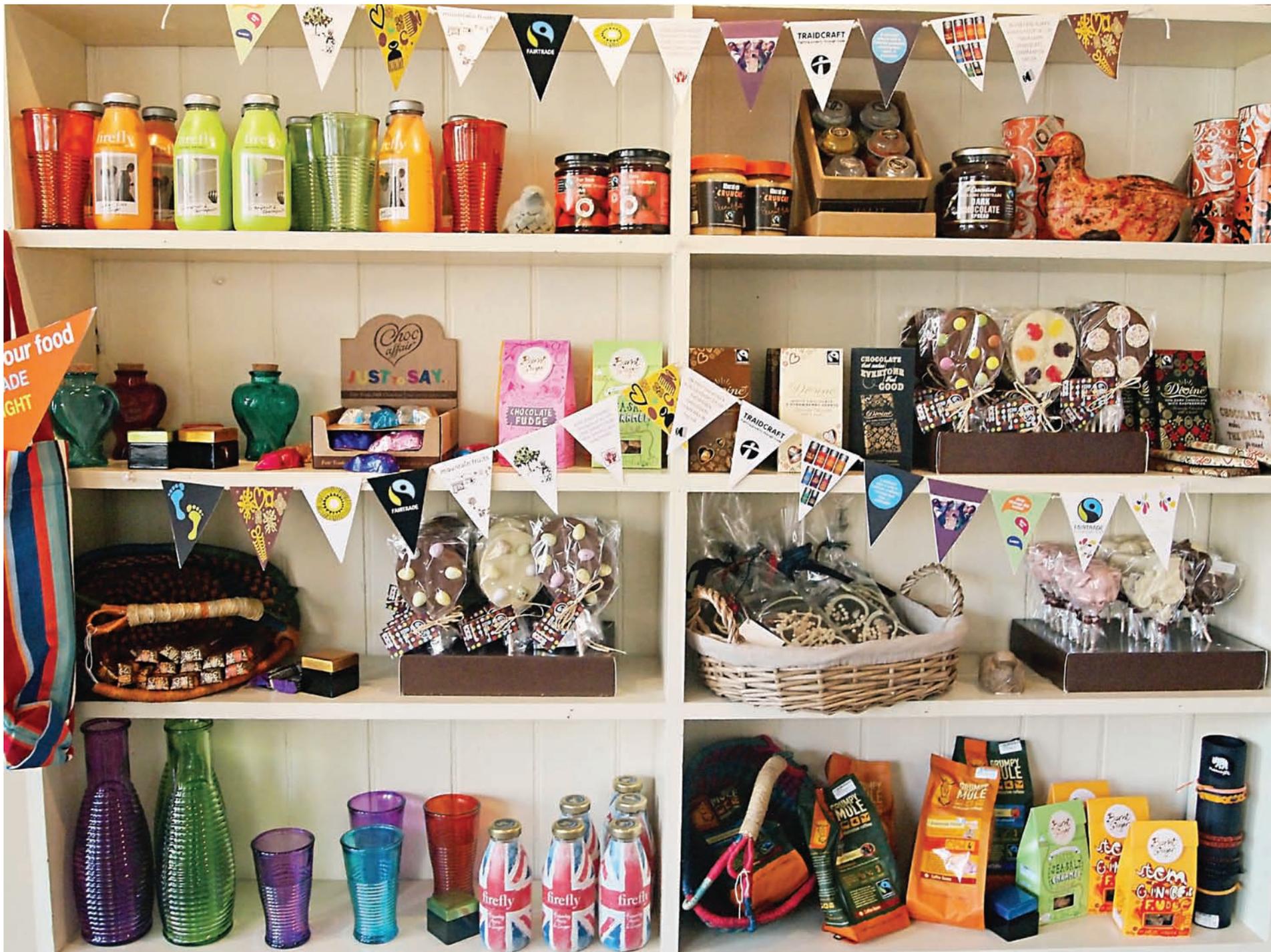
Three Star Assembly ☆☆☆

Script

Take a look at this image. When you stand in front of the shelves in any shop or supermarket you will see items attractively displayed. They seem to say to you 'reach out and buy me'. The goods in front of you may have travelled thousands of miles and from all the continents of the world. However, many of the people involved in the production chain may live in poverty, working long hours for very little pay. They will not see shops with well-stocked shelves. In their shops the range of goods they may buy will be very limited and they will have just enough cash to buy the bare essentials. This story explores child labour in the chocolate industry.

During the assembly you could use a small Team of Experts with laptop or tablet computers to find out any additional information about child labour in the chocolate industry or the work of Fairtrade, which could then be shared later.





Story

Chris settled down on the sofa facing his 42-inch plasma television screen. He took another bite of his favourite chocolate bar and felt it melt in his mouth. He felt the sensation and the flavour exploding on his taste buds. Life was pretty good for this 12-year-old boy in the UK.

His chocolate bar had started its journey thousands of miles away in the hands of another 12-year-old boy, let's call him Wamah. In 2011 a BBC journalist visited the Ivory Coast in Africa and watched young children opening the cocoa pods that are used to make chocolate with extremely sharp tools called machetes.

The reporter commented:

During my visit to the Ivory Coast earlier this month it was easy to find child labour and difficult to see substantive measures to prevent it.

The sight of seeing young children carrying machetes and pesticide equipment is common throughout the cocoa belt.

More than 800,000 children there are believed to do some form of cocoa related work. I found a group walking along a muddy path towards trees where bright yellow cocoa pods hung ready for harvest.

Silently the children squatted down and started work. They wore torn and grubby shorts and T-shirts. There was no laughter or play.

On their legs were scars from machete injuries. There was no first aid kit around and no protective clothing.

One – a 12-year-old – said that his parents lived far away and he had not seen his family for three years.¹

Life was pretty bad for this 12-year-old boy. He is very different from Chris comfortably settled in front of the television. This young boy has never tasted chocolate and most likely never will.

Shortly after this story was broadcast, the confectionary company concerned said they would start an enquiry into the use of child labour on the farms that supply them with cocoa. They also pointed out that this could mean they will have to pay much more for cocoa beans. Ten years earlier the giant food firm had signed a commitment to bring an end to child labour within the industry.

The chocolate industry makes billions of pounds in profit every year.

¹ See www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15917164 (accessed 28 August 2012).

Questions to consider:

- Which items on the shelf look the most tempting and say 'come and buy me'?
- Would you change your mind if you knew that children had worked in unsafe conditions to make the product?
- How do you think a large confectionary company should spend some of its profits?
- Should the wrappers on chocolate bars indicate whether it has been produced using child labour?
- If we stopped buying chocolate would it help to bring about change?
- Can you sum up the messages in this assembly in just six powerful words?

If you have used the Team of Experts model you could ask them to provide additional information at this point.

Four Star Assembly ☆☆☆☆

With some preparation you can find many pictures of child labour on cocoa farms on the Internet. There are also many newspaper accounts which could be used to support your assembly.

Work with a group of children to explore the concept of Fairtrade chocolate, and see if it is possible to establish which chocolate producers guarantee that their confectionery has been manufactured without the use of child labour. It may also be possible to do a price comparison between Fairtrade chocolate bars and those that might have been produced using child labour. The children could present their information in the assembly through a PowerPoint presentation or they could make their own news broadcast using Flip Video.

The children could also write letters to the major chocolate producers urging them to cease using child labour.

Five Star Assembly ☆☆☆☆☆

You could enhance the assembly further by using film footage relating to how child labour is used in the chocolate industry – many short films are available on the Internet. During the film the children could be asked to come up with some of their own questions. These could be identified during the assembly but used later in the classroom within a Philosophy for Children type of enquiry.

Acknowledgements

It was nearly seven years ago that I was welcomed into the Independent Thinking family. They are a fabulously talented and diverse group of educationalists who think deeply about schools and education. They also have the amazing capacity to make others think about the needs of our young people. In the course of those seven years I have regularly had the privilege of spending time with them and sharing ideas. Each time this happens I grow as an educationalist. Much of the work I suggest in this book has been shaped by those opportunities and I therefore thank my wonderful colleagues at Independent Thinking. However, I would especially like to thank Dr David George. Just as I was starting to flag, we met up to talk about this book. I spent a truly inspirational and remarkable few hours with him. I thank David for his contributions – I am sure he will recognize his influence on the book.

This book has been truly brought to life by the stunning photographs of Jane Hewitt. These images, in the hands of a skilful teacher, will lead to transformational learning. I first met Jane during the spring of 2013 when she showed me the collection of photographs that now enhance this book. My mind was blown away and I am indebted to her. Please use her pictures with the young people in your school. Used in either the classroom or the assembly hall, they have the capacity to change the world for the better.

About the photographs



Jane Hewitt taught, mainly at secondary level, for 30 years. She still loves learning, discovering new ideas and photography and is rarely found without a camera around her neck.

Jane is a talented photographer, unless where specified all photographs in this book were taken by her.

Many of Jane's images from this book are for sale as postcards or posters for classroom use. See <http://www.photoboxgallery.com/learningthroughalens>



Images available on the CD



For young people growing up in the twenty-first century life can seem very complex, with many issues to worry about – such as global warming, depleted natural resources and living together harmoniously in rapidly changing communities. The generation of children currently passing through our schools will have to resolve these issues for us. This will be achieved partly through the skills and the intelligence they gather and partly through the development of a spiritual intelligence that will enable them to become good citizens and do the right things at the right time – which is the focus of this unique book. It also recognises the pressures school leaders and teachers are under. The materials for each theme are presented in each of these three ways:

Three Star Assembly ★★☆☆ Help! I have only ten minutes in which to plan a good assembly or classroom activity

Four Star Assembly ★★☆☆ I have lots of extra time to plan or collect resources or involve the children

Five Star Assembly ★★☆☆ Ofsted are coming! I want to plan the assembly of all assemblies, the lesson of all lessons

This book is aimed at key stages two and three, ages 7–14. It contains beautiful and thought-provoking colour photographs throughout, which are also included on a free accompanying CD.

This is a 'must have' for all of us who lead school assemblies and want to engage pupils with relevant world issues that will touch their hearts and open their minds.

*Dr. Neil Hawkes, International Consultant and
Trainer in Values-based Education (VbE)*

A life-saver for those times when you need an assembly that will really impress!

James Bowen, Head Teacher, Mill Rythe Junior School

This book gives teachers the chance to use assemblies to bring awe, wonder and spirituality into school.

*Bill Lord, Head Teacher, Long Sutton Community Primary
School, former National Strategies Literacy Advisor*

Offers teachers and schools a wealth and breadth of thought-provoking opportunities for reflection.

*Sr Jude Groden RSM, Primary R.E. Adviser,
Diocese of Brentwood*

Challenging and thought-provoking subject matter, coupled with incredible photography, ensure that both child and practitioner are hooked.

Karen Bister, Deputy Head Teacher, Woodthorpe Primary

The excellent quality of the pictures sets the emotive backcloth for relevant thought and reflection.

Shane Jarman, Head Teacher, Denaby Main Primary School



Will Ryan has worked in schools in Rotherham, South Yorkshire for over thirty years as a Teacher, Head Teacher and Local Authority Adviser. As a head teacher he led a school that prized itself on genuine pupil creativity and was described by Ofsted as 'outstanding'. He is a speaker and Associate of Independent Thinking.

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