

DISCOVERY FILM FESTIVAL

Scotland's International Film Festival
for Young Audiences

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Teachers' Resource Pack: **Lowland Kids**

Senior Phase | Created by Sonia MacEwan

Discovery Film Festival | Mon 2 – Wed 18 November 2026

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

DUNDEE
ONE CITY, MANY DISCOVERIES

CREATIVE
LAND
SCOT
ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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dca.org.uk/discovery-film-festival

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Introduction

Discovery Learning Resources give you exciting classroom activities to enhance Curriculum for Excellence delivery.

They are created by classroom teachers and education professionals.

Each resource aims to:

- support and extend working with film in the classroom
- help prepare teachers for a class visit to a Discovery Film Festival film and to extend the impact of that visit for delivery of CfE
- develop confidence in Moving Image Education approaches and working with 21st Century Literacy/moving image texts

Each resource is free and available to download from:

<https://www.dca.org.uk/discovery-film-festival-resources/>

Lowland Kids

Dir: Sandra Winther

USA, Denmark 2025 / 1h34m

English language



Lowland Kids

Synopsis:

The film follows two teenagers and their uncle on Louisiana's rapidly disappearing Isle de Jean Charles. They face an uncertain future as the U.S. government makes an unprecedented effort to resettle their entire community before the island succumbs to the sea. The trio, described as an *unbreakable triangle* by Howard, are part of the community deemed America's First Climate Refugees.

While climate change used to be an abstract concept to them, it has become a very real and dangerous threat to their existence, when Hurricane Ida made landfall in 2021, nearly every home on the island was wiped out, forcing the Brunets to split up to find shelter. A visceral film that pits man against nature, this story provides an inside look into the lives of families living on the brink of the climate crisis.

Advisory note:

The film might be upsetting for some viewers. It follows the teenagers and their uncle on an emotional journey as they are torn between having to give up the place they grew up and have ties to, and their new life.

Teacher's notes:

Age and stage recommendations, including CfE objectives:

The film is suitable for ages 15 and above.

This pack is aimed at Senior Phase learners. This film is recommended for S4–6.

The following CfE Experiences and Outcomes are covered in this pack:

National 5:

Geography
Environmental Science
Modern Studies

Higher:

Geography
Environmental Science
Modern Studies

Teacher quote:

This is a beautiful film that tells the story of the remaining teenagers on the Isle de Jean Charles, a narrow ridge of land in Louisiana which is accessed by one road. At the beginning of the film, we are informed that it is losing land at the rate of a football pitch per hour due to rising sea water levels. 98% of the land has been lost in 60 years. While making the film, over 1,000 miles of canals were dug for oil and gas. Residents are being relocated as part of the first federally funded mass relocation in the USA, where they are known as 'Climate Change Refugees'.

Pupils will see elements of their own lives in that of the teenagers, together with a remarkable way of living as they try to hold onto their heritage. This film truly shows the harrowing effects of Climate Change and raises the question of how much has been inflicted by humans and therefore could've been avoided.

There are strong links to senior phase qualifications, mainly through climate change, land use and biodiversity. The federal programme of relocation could also be explored through Modern Studies.





Before watching the film:

Activity 1: **Poster and Trailer**

PART 1

Show pupils the poster in **Appendix 1**.

Discuss:

- Who do they think the characters are?
- What age do they think they are?
- Where do they think the film is set?
- What differences are there in the characters?
- What do they know about the background location?
- What links do they think the film might have to the subject we are studying?

PART 2

Now watch the trailer at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbPtUTroXD&t=101s>

Discuss:

- What do they now know about the characters?
- How do they think their lives might be different to their own?
- What issues are they facing?
- What was the significance of the oil rig they spotted – why do you think this is in the trailer?
- What links are there with the subject we are studying?



Activity 2: **Stay or Go?**

Modern Studies – National 5, Higher

This activity could be carried out as a whole class discussion, in small groups or as a written task for pupils to complete individually.

- Discuss the relocation policy. Why would the people of Isle de Jean Charles prefer to stay?
 - Discuss the inequalities climate change refugees may experience and identify solutions.
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Activity 3: **Debate**

Geography – National 5, Higher **Modern Studies – National 5, Higher**

Give pupils the relevant part of **Appendix 2**, depending on the level of course they are studying.

GEOGRAPHY – NATIONAL 5

Lowland Kids: Should We Stay or Should We Move?

Pupils work either on their own, with a partner or in a small group.

They will decide on whether to stay on the island or move.

They create a presentation in any way they choose to convince people of their decision.

GEOGRAPHY – HIGHER

Climate Migration Debate

Pupils are split into two groups to debate the motion ‘The residents of Isle de Jean Charles should be described as climate migrants.’

MODERN STUDIES

Pupils should be put into groups of at least 4–6. Within the group, they will split into for and against. Alternatively, this could be done as a whole class.

NATIONAL 5

This House believes that governments should relocate communities threatened by climate change.

HIGHER

This House believes that climate refugees should receive the same legal protections as political refugees.



Activity 4: **Ecosystem**

Environmental Science – National 5, Higher

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE – NATIONAL 5

Pupils complete the activity in **Appendix 3**, creating a food web and answering questions.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE – HIGHER

Pupils are split into groups and given the relevant part of **Appendix 3**.

There are 11 organism cards and 4 impact cards. Pupils can either be in groups of 15 where 11 have organism cards and 4 have impact cards or the teacher can play the impact cards.

Pupils begin the activity, creating a food web with the organism cards. The impact cards are then introduced, one at a time. Discussion after the activity.

Activity 5: **Higher Geography**

Pupils should explore the following:

- Explain the push and pull factors associated with the climate refugees in the film.
- Describe the impact of forced migration on the climate refugees in the film.
- Identify the causes of land degradation in Isle de Jean Charles. What are the consequences of this? Suggest ways in which this could've been managed.
- Prepare a report or presentation about the physical and human causes of climate change experienced in Isle de Jean Charles. You should include environmental, economic and social effects together with strategies that could be put in place to manage these.
- Oil and gas was mentioned from the start of the film. Explain why there is a rising global demand for this, despite renewable alternatives by highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of this type of energy.
- Compare oil and gas to another alternative source of energy.
- Use the internet to source data on the population of Isle de Jean Charles since oil and gas extraction began in the area. Show the data in an appropriate graph and explain the trend.



Activity 6: **National 5 Geography**

Pupils should explore the following:

- Compare the teenager's home in Isle de Jean Charles to Scotland. Include natural resources, natural disasters, governments, landscape, education and healthcare.
 - Discuss the factors affecting the population of Isle de Jean Charles and the impact these factors have had.
 - Discuss the impact of climate change identified in the film and suggest possible solutions as an alternative to the federal relocation programme.
 - Discuss the impact of the hurricanes in the film and suggest possible solutions that could've been put in place.
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Activity 7: **Higher Environmental Science**

Pupils should explore the following:

- Discuss the causes of growing global demand for oil and gas.
 - Explain one method of energy sustainability and give advantages and disadvantages of this method.
 - Identify the impacts of global warming and climate change in the film and suggest ways in which these could've been minimised.
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Activity 8: **National 5 Environmental Science**

Pupils should explore the following:

- Identify the stakeholders that are competing for land use in Isle de Jean Charles.
- Compare flooding and draughts. You should include the causes, impacts and ways to reduce in a report.
- Create a poster to explain the natural greenhouse effect.
- Identify the gasses that contribute to the enhanced greenhouse effect and ways these increased in the film.
- Suggest ways of making Isle de Jean Charles more sustainable. Remember to include social, economic and environmental factors.
- Discuss the social economic and environmental impacts of climate change identified in the film.
- Compare the issues of oil and gas as an energy source with the issues of one other alternative renewable source.

Appendix 1: Poster





Appendix 2: Debate

National 5 Geography

You are members of the Isle de Jean Charles Community Council.

The island has lost most of its land due to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, hurricanes and land subsidence. The US government has offered funding to relocate residents to "The New Isle" on higher ground. However, many people want to remain on their ancestral land.

Your task is to decide what the community should do.

You must:

- Decide on either stay or go.
- Use evidence from the film.
- Use geographical terminology.
- Have a justified conclusion.

Create a presentation in any way you like to convince people of your decision.

Higher Geography

The residents of Isle de Jean Charles have been described as America's first climate refugees. However, some geographers argue that climate change is only one factor influencing migration. Rising seas, erosion, land subsidence, hurricanes and oil-industry development have all contributed to environmental decline.

Motion

"The residents of Isle de Jean Charles should be described as climate migrants."

Group A

Prepare arguments supporting the statement.

Group B

Prepare arguments challenging the statement.

Success Criteria

Use:

- Decide on either stay or go.
- Use evidence from the film.
- Use geographical terminology.

Appendix 3: Ecosystems

National 5 Environmental Science

The wetlands around Isle de Jean Charles support:

- Fish
- Birds
- Amphibians
- Invertebrates
- Marsh plants

Create a food web using these organisms.

Answer the following questions:

1. What would happen if marsh plants disappeared?
2. Which species would be affected first?
3. How would biodiversity change?
4. Identify one example of interdependence from your food web.

Higher Environmental Studies

Organism Card 1

Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*)

Role: Producer

Habitat: Salt marsh wetlands

Feeds on: Sunlight, carbon dioxide and water through photosynthesis

Importance:

- Forms the base of the food web.
- Provides shelter for small animals.
- Helps stabilise sediments and reduce erosion.

Vulnerability:

- Damaged by habitat loss and increased erosion.
- Changes in salinity can affect growth.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Organism Card 2

Marsh Plants

Role: Producer

Habitat: Freshwater and coastal wetlands

Feeds on: Sunlight, nutrients and water

Importance:

- Provides food and shelter.
- Supports insects and small animals.
- Helps maintain wetland structure.

Vulnerability:

- Saltwater intrusion reduces growth.
- Flooding can destroy vegetation.



Organism Card 3

Marsh Insects

Role: Primary consumer

Habitat: Wetland vegetation

Feeds on: Marsh plants and algae

Importance:

- Important food source for fish and birds.
- Supports wetland food webs.

Vulnerability:

- Decline when vegetation is lost.
- Sensitive to habitat change.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Organism Card 4

Zooplankton

Role: Primary consumer

Habitat: Wetland waterways

Feeds on: Phytoplankton and microscopic plants

Importance:

- Transfers energy from producers to larger organisms.

Vulnerability:

- Affected by changes in water quality.



Organism Card 5

Small Fish (e.g. Minnows)

Role: Primary/secondary consumer

Habitat: Wetland channels and shallow waters

Feeds on: Insects and zooplankton

Importance:

- Important prey species.
- Supports larger predators.

Vulnerability:

- Declines when water quality decreases.
- Affected by habitat loss.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Organism Card 6

Shrimp

Role: Secondary consumer

Habitat: Coastal marsh waters

Feeds on: Algae, plankton and small organisms

Importance:

- Important link between small organisms and larger predators.
- Supports commercial fisheries.

Vulnerability:

- Sensitive to changes in salinity and habitat quality.



Organism Card 7

Amphibians (Frogs)

Role: Secondary consumer

Habitat: Wetland edges and freshwater areas

Feeds on: Insects and small invertebrates

Importance:

- Controls insect populations.
- Indicator of ecosystem health.

Vulnerability:

- Sensitive to pollution and habitat loss.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Organism Card 8

Wading Birds (Herons/Egrets)

Role: Predator

Habitat: Wetlands and coastal marshes

Feeds on: Fish, frogs, shrimp and insects

Importance:

- Helps control prey populations.
- Indicator species for wetland health.

Vulnerability:

- Loss of feeding habitat reduces populations.



Organism Card 9

Birds of Prey

Role: Top predator

Habitat: Coastal wetlands

Feeds on: Small birds, fish and mammals

Importance:

- Maintains balance in food webs.

Vulnerability:

- Declines when prey species disappear.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Organism Card 10

Alligator

Role: Apex predator

Habitat: Wetlands and freshwater areas

Feeds on: Fish, birds, amphibians and mammals

Importance:

- Helps maintain ecosystem balance.

Vulnerability:

- Requires large areas of suitable habitat.



Organism Card 11

Bacteria and Fungi

Role: Decomposers

Habitat: Soil, sediments and water

Feeds on: Dead organic matter

Importance:

- Recycle nutrients.
- Support plant growth.

Vulnerability:

- Affected by pollution and changes in environmental conditions.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Impact Card 1

Sea-Level Rise

Cause: Climate change

Effect:

- More frequent flooding.
- Saltwater enters freshwater habitats.
- Wetland plants decline.

Remove:

Marsh plants may decline.



Impact Card 2

Coastal Erosion

Cause: Rising seas, storms and loss of vegetation

Effect:

- Habitat disappears.
- Species lose shelter and feeding areas.

Remove:

Wetland-dependent species.



Appendix 3: Ecosystems

Impact Card 3

Canal Construction for Oil and Gas

Cause: Human resource extraction

Effect:

- Wetlands become fragmented.
- Saltwater intrusion increases.

Remove:

Species dependent on freshwater habitats.



Impact Card 4

Hurricane Damage

Cause: Extreme weather events

Effect:

- Vegetation destroyed.
- Animals lose habitats.
- Food webs disrupted.

Remove:

Several species at random.





Appendix 3: Ecosystems

After completing the task:

1. Which organism was most important in maintaining ecosystem stability?
2. Which species were affected first when habitat was lost? Why?
3. Explain how removing a producer affects the whole food web.
4. How does this activity demonstrate interdependence?
5. Suggest two management strategies that could increase ecosystem resilience.
6. Create a “Recovery Plan” for Isle de Jean Charles.

Your plan must include:

- ✓ One biodiversity protection strategy
- ✓ One climate adaptation strategy
- ✓ One sustainable management strategy
- ✓ An explanation of how these improve ecosystem resilience

Useful links:

More information on the resettlement programme:

<https://locd.la.gov/programs/isle-de-jean-charles-resettlement-project>

Climate Refugees of Isle de Jean Charles in the news:

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/people-isle-jean-charles-are-louisianas-first-climate-refugees-they-wont-be-last>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240130-this-louisiana-town-moved-to-escape-climate-disaster>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/160525-isle-de-jean-charles-louisiana-sinking-climate-change-refugees>

Climate change impact study of Rohingya refugees:

https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Mtr_3l0U05A=&portalid=0

Climate refugees:

<https://www.climate-refugees.org/>

Interviews with the director/cast:

<https://filmfestivaltoday.com/interviews/interview-with-director-sandra-winter-of-lowland-kids>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lttto2TpTLs>

<https://www.rogerebert.com/features/short-films-in-focus-lowland-kids>





Evaluating this resource

We hope that you found this resource useful and appropriate. Please do send us any film reviews, letters from your pupils, documentation of classwork and your feedback by e-mailing olivia.knight@dca.org.uk

Would you make a good Discovery Film Festival Case Study?

We are seeking a number of simple Case Studies in how teachers have used or are using Discovery films in the classroom across Curriculum for Excellence and across the Levels.

Any case studies that we develop would be intended for presentation on GLOW, the Creativity Portal and on Discovery Film Festival websites. We have a simple template to be completed and are keen to have classwork and documentation included. If you would like to be a Discovery Case Study please e-mail olivia.knight@dca.org.uk