



# TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH STORYTELLING

## Engaging Hearts and Minds for a Sustainable Future

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### ABSTRACT

As language teachers, we have long recognised the value of the arts in supporting students' academic progress, creativity, and emotional well-being. Storytelling, in particular, holds a special place as one of humanity's oldest and most powerful learning tools. Accessible to learners of all ages and backgrounds, it provides a natural pathway for expression, connection, and meaning-making—especially within today's multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

This webinar builds on recent pedagogical work, including an extra-mural course delivered at Roma Tre University, which focused on the joy of storytelling and its transformative potential for both teachers and learners. In that context, participants explored how storytelling fosters self-expression, intercultural understanding, and the development of learner agency, while also practising storytelling techniques and creative classroom design.

In the face of the climate crisis, storytelling has taken on new urgency as a tool for climate and sustainability education. Scholars such as Kieran Egan (1986) have long advocated for the central role of story in education, arguing that it helps learners engage with complexity and develop ethical awareness. David Heathfield's work on global storytelling projects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further illustrates how narrative can promote values such as empathy, justice, and responsibility.

Storytelling allows students to enter into environmental narratives—not simply as listeners, but as critical thinkers and potential change-makers. By embedding sustainability in character-driven stories, imagined futures, or local folk traditions, teachers can make abstract ecological concepts more tangible and relatable. Moreover, when drama and performance are integrated into storytelling, learners benefit from improved memorisation, fluency, and pronunciation, as well as heightened motivation and collaboration (Maley & Duff, 2005).

**GrACE – Green Europe: Active Citizenship and the Environment**  
**Jean Monnet Teacher Training – Erasmus+**

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This interactive session will offer high school and university educators practical strategies for using storytelling to:

- Explore sustainability through personal, cultural, and imaginative lenses
- Foster multilingual and intercultural competence
- Design creative activities that promote learner voice and global citizenship
- Support language development through embodied, arts-based practices

Participants will have opportunities to reflect on their own classroom contexts, experiment with storytelling, and co-create narratives that bridge disciplinary boundaries and engage students as emotionally invested learners and future-oriented citizens.

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