



Cornerstones

Sir David Attenborough – a different kind of scientist

Group:	Whole school
Key message:	There are different kinds of scientists
Props:	Assembly board BBC clip showing David Attenborough in <i>Zoo Quest</i> http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00db1jf BBC clip showing excerpt from <i>Blue Planet II</i> http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05pr6ft

Engage

Ask: When you think of a scientist, what do you imagine?

Children may describe a stereotypical scientist – someone wearing a lab coat, using test tubes and carrying out experiments. Explain that many scientists do not work in a laboratory or carry out experiments in the way we imagine.

Show the video of the early wildlife programme *Zoo Quest*. Explain that this programme was made in 1954, by the famous scientist and naturalist, Sir David Attenborough. The programme looks very different from the ones we watch today, but it was important because it changed the way we learn about animals, plants and the world.

Develop

Sir David Attenborough was born in 1926. From being a young boy, David was passionate about one subject – nature. By the age of seven, he had a huge collection of fossils, stones and birds eggs and had made up his mind that he wanted to work with animals and the natural world. When he was a teenager, David listened to a talk by a famous scientist who explained how important it was to conserve nature and to protect wildlife and the environment.

Ask: What does ‘conserve’ mean?

David studied zoology and geology at university. He then went to work for the BBC, and made television programmes about nature, like *Zoo Quest*. In David’s programmes, animals were filmed in their natural habitats and were observed doing things like feeding, hunting, building nests and having young. Wildlife programmes had never been made this way before.

David began to travel all over the world, discovering never-before-seen animals, people and places. He made sure that he always went to the places that the animals lived, however far away and dangerous they were. He has filmed in jungles, deserts and other dangerous places. For example, he has travelled to Rwanda to find out about mountain gorillas, to Patagonia to observe sea lions, Antarctica and the Amazon rainforest.



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Sir David Attenborough's knowledge about the natural world makes him a great scientist. However, one of his great skills is that he can communicate well and teach people about animals and the natural world in a way that interests and excites them. He received a knighthood in 1985 because of his work.

During his career, Sir David Attenborough has:

- changed the way wild animals are treated when they are filmed
- helped educate millions of people through his wildlife programmes
- educated us about pollution and climate change
- discovered plants, animals and people that were not known about before
- had plants and animals named after him
- inspired other people from all over the world to study nature
- more honorary degrees than anyone else!

Although he's now over 90 years old, Sir David Attenborough is still passionate about the natural world.

Show the BBC clip *Blue Planet II*.

Ask: How is this programme different from *Zoo Quest*?

Innovate

Ask: Now you have learned about Sir David Attenborough, can you think of any other ways to describe a scientist?

Explain that there are many different kinds of scientist, studying many different things. All scientists, though, try to explain how things work by observing, researching, asking questions and trying to make sense of what they have discovered.

Ask: When did you last act like a scientist? Invite children to describe activities in school which have involved working scientifically.

Express

The American publication, *Time Magazine*, awarded Sir David the title of 'Hero of the Environment' and said: 'No living person has done more to make people of Planet Earth more aware of the world around them.'

Discuss this with the children and ask 'Why does learning about plants, animals and being aware of the world around us matter?'