



The Red Box Project



#FreePeriods and International Women's Day 2019

Activities for schools

Dear Teacher,

The right to education is a fundamental human right for all children, regardless of their sex.

Unfortunately, for 1 in 10 young people who can't afford menstrual products, periods stop them from taking part in everything that school has to offer. Without easy access to menstrual products, they find themselves missing school, struggling to concentrate and unable to participate in activities. It's not right. No one should have to miss out on their education because of their period.

Amika George, aged 19, started the #FreePeriods movement to fight this problem. In 2017, she took her fight for free menstrual products in schools to the UK Government when she organised a petition and demonstration outside Downing Street. A year later, little progress has been made. Whilst communities have stepped up to support organisations like The Red Box Project and provide donations of menstrual products for young people, the Government still refuses to take action to ensure all young people have equal access to education. Scotland and Wales have both committed budgets to provide free menstrual products for school children. Together with Amika George, The Red Box Project is determined young people in England will not be left behind.

To celebrate International Women's Day 2019, The Red Box Project and Amika George would love you to join the #FreePeriods movement.

How can you join us?

1. Discuss with young people the importance of gender equality in schools. Why does it matter? How do periods fit into this issue? What should be done about it?
2. Take action: we've included several activities suitable for English lessons, citizenship lessons, PSHE, form times or debating or feminism clubs, to get students to think about #FreePeriods. This includes an activity to help students to write to their MP about the issue. This is a real world problem and letters could be sent to their MP in anticipation of a response.
3. Join the #FreePeriods movement online. We would love to hear from schools tweeting or commenting about the difference #FreePeriods would make to your students. Please do tag @RedBoxProject and @AmikaGeorge in your tweets.

Thank you for joining us in the fight for #FreePeriods.

The Red Box Project

Activities for International Women's Day 2019

The activities below have been planned to be suitable for KS3 upwards. They may be used in English, PSHE or Citizenship lessons, or after school debating or feminism clubs. Collectively, they can be used as a lesson, culminating in a letter writing task. But activities can also be done individually. Most activities can be done by mixed groups of girls and boys and indeed they may be helpful for exploring with boys the different experiences girls have growing up. You may wish to consider mixing groups or comparing responses of girls and boys when they work separately, depending on their class.

Please keep in mind that many young people may need these products to be supplied for free themselves and manage discussions sensitively.

Activity 1: Discussion

Are girls and boys are treated equally in schools?

An initial discussion to invite children to think about the way boys and girls are treated in schools. Students may reflect both on how things are today and how things have been in the past.

Examples to consider:

- uniform
- sporting activities
- subject choices

The issue of menstruation may or may not come up. If it doesn't, ask students to consider it. If you menstruate, how can it affect your education? Students may or may not have considered this before and may need some help in reflecting on their own experiences and in thinking about or talking about experiences outside their own, such as what might happen if you start your period but don't have access to menstrual products, for whatever reason.

Activity 2: Pair work

In pairs, students should list the number of ways periods can interfere with someone's education.

This may involve an element of self-reflection but students should also be challenged to think about circumstances outside their own.

Ideas to consider include:

- missing school when periods start unexpectedly or when a student doesn't have access to menstrual products
- needing to use the toilets in lesson time
- feeling uncomfortable or anxious about joining in with sporting activities

Activity 3: Debate

“This house believes that the Government should provide free menstrual products for all school children” – discuss!

A class could be split in two with the motion being argued on either side. This is a challenging subject with lots to explore.

Common arguments against include:

- it would be expensive for the Government to pay for
- they are relatively cheap for students to provide themselves
- students have to bring other essentials, like pens

These might be countered with:

- the Government must ensure that all young people have equal access to an education
- periods can be much heavier than cheap products can handle
- periods can last for a long time and need a lot of products a month
- schools provide toilet roll, so why not menstrual products?

Activity 4: Letter writing

If students believe that free menstrual products should be provided in schools, they may wish to write to their MP to urge them to support the #FreePeriods campaign.

Students could be encouraged to use persuasive writing techniques, to construct well-developed arguments, and to include counter arguments, as previously explored in debate and discussion.

The following template could be provided to scaffold for students as needed:

Dear [MP's name]

I am a Year [] student at [name of school] in [name of constituency].

I am writing to you to ask you to support the #FreePeriods legal campaign launched by Amika George and The Red Box Project for the Government to fund free menstrual products in all schools and colleges in the UK.

I believe that these products should be freely available in schools because...

Furthermore,...

Whilst some people may argue that ..., I believe that...

Please can you support the #FreePeriods campaign and help to bring an end to Period Poverty in our schools? You could show your support by speaking in

Parliament about this issue, using your platform to call for Government action to end Period Poverty and by sharing the #FreePeriods campaign on your social media.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Further information

Examples of persuasive writing on this subject can be found at:

<https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/amika-george-open-letter-theresa-may>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/aug/25/lets-make-period-poverty-history-girls-miss-school-sanitary-products>

Useful websites:

freeperiods.org

redboxproject.org

parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp

twitter.com/AmikaGeorge

twitter.com/RedBoxProject