

Creating a sense of place: some activity ideas

Senses around me Tune in quietly to your surroundings and focus on what you can see, smell, hear and feel around you. Either describe this to others or write responses.

Haiku In a group, use the words you have collected to describe your feelings about the place you are in. Write a haiku poem – it is only 3 lines long. The first line has 5 syllables, the second line has 7 syllables and the third line has 5 syllables.

Buddy Blindfold With a partner blindfolded, lead them safely around the place you are in, giving them directions and telling them what any hazards might be. How does this make you feel? How does the 'led' partner feel?

Risk Assessment Use images of the locality or place to identify hazards and actions you could take to keep safe. Write your own risk assessments

Word Hunt! In teams, race to see who can complete a list of things you can find beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Or use labels such as 'rough' 'smooth' 'jagged' 'spiky' etc to sort found objects out of doors.

Changing the landscape Identify the most influential way that people have improved/ damaged the landscape you're in and give reasons why. What would you suggest?

Raindrop Imagine you are a raindrop, a hailstone, a snowflake: describe what might happen to you when you reach the ground.

In Five! Choose five words which describe this locality.

What's the secret? The next person or animal you see is carrying a secret. Describe what it is and where they are going. Map their journey and describe it.

In the dark! Imagine that you had to spend a night here – what hazards might you face? What might you hear?

Opposites attract Find two objects that are opposite to each other in one or more ways and explain why.

Sound Maps Stand still and listen very carefully and try to identify different sounds and the direction they are coming from. Use lines of different length from a centre point to describe distance and direction of the sounds you hear.

Sounds like Close your eyes and listen – can you hear a sound that is the result of human activity and one that comes from nature? Explain what they are and where they are from.

One place, many stories Use anecdotal evidence, web research, historical documents and / or newspapers and other media reports to build and compare different stories of a place. AVOID the 'single story' but instead ask yourself 'whose story is this – and why might they have this point of view?' Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice — and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding <http://pulsemedia.org/2009/11/29/the-danger-of-a-single-story-chimamanda-adichie/> A most useful short, yet powerful film.

Musical Landscapes Can you 'play' the landscape? Talk about the environmental qualities e.g. rough materials of buildings, dark colours, straight lines soaring upwards, regularly spaced windows etc and use these remarks to develop a composition using instruments whose qualities suit the landscape being described. Build the ideas you see into interpretations using pitch, timbre, ostinato etc.

Taking you there Use webcams to bring places alive or search Youtube for video clips. News and blogs often have first person accounts of events in the news e.g. a family talking about leaving their house in the middle of the night because of bush fires or floods. Use video and / or audio to bring a place in your locality alive for others – you could highlight a local issue, record changes over time or advocate a place worth visiting or saving.

In – role Re- create a ‘role play’ area in the corner of the classroom using a range of artefacts and materials – older pupils still get a lot out of this.

Zoom Use mapping software such as Google and Street View to ‘zoom’ in to the scale of everyday lived lives and discuss how places are nested within each other. See ‘Zoom’ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RPeFJJF73k>.

Scaled investigations Map and measure the school grounds using conventional and other measuring methods e.g. time to walk perimeter, number of steps as well as metres. Use this for a display and add pupil’s perceptions and drawings. Investigate a metre square patch using magnifying glasses and add this to the display.

Personal and public geographies Use ‘MyWalks’ and ‘Messy Maps’ to share personal impressions of place (see <http://www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/myplaceyourplaceourplace/mywalksandmessymaps/>). Make up names for different parts of the school grounds and design name plates and signposts.

Community Views Canvass the local community about their views using pupil - written questionnaires. Invite parents and locals in to view an exhibition of collated views.

Art on show Create environmental art using found natural objects and display around the school. Hold an exhibition. Use found objects to describe how you *feel* about a place.

Story books Storybooks are great for bringing places to life. All storybooks have settings and convey a different sense of place. See ‘Maps and Stories’ and some of the other literacy related ideas here <http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/geographyliteracy/> for some ideas for different age groups.

Story settings Use a short walk to create a story using chosen spots as sequential parts of a story. These can be places visited through first- hand experience or you can zoom in with street view eg on www.maps.google.com.

Mystery Trail Devise a trail with cryptic riddles and / or give map coordinates and directions. Ask another class to try and solve the riddle.

Another View Visit a place in role, eg pretend you are looking through the eyes of a toddler, a senior citizen or a disabled person and imagine how they would feel about that place and what they could do there. You could use some cardboard ‘empathy’ glasses to help get into role!

Looking up Look at your environment from a different view – e.g. why not try looking up and seeing what it is that you might normally miss.

Picture this Take photographs and vote for the most iconic image of a place you have visited. What do images say about a place = and what do they leave out?

See through Laminated sheets that are processed without a middle can be cut into four for postcard sized ‘tracing paper’ to use outside that will withstand weather. Hold up against a skyline and trace over shapes with a felt pen to show relative heights and distances accurately. Wipe clean and start again.

Derive cards Create a series of illustrated prompt cards and thread onto key ring. Use these to guide your movements out of doors to create an unexpected journey.