

OUR LANDSCAPES

Process:

1. Setting the scene

Introduce landscapes and processes involved in their formation (water, wind, ice and seas).

Discuss other influences (weather and weathering, climatic change, rock formation and strength, earth movements and volcanic eruptions etc.).

Focus on local landscapes. Gather digital photographs of local landscapes. For example, the pupils should be able to recognise and explain the origin of the local landscape seen from the classroom window (including the human landscape). This will also be a good opportunity for them to annotate (make notes about) the digital photographs or sketches made from the area. A class visit to local features would also be useful.

Describe how wind, water, ice and the sea may have influenced the formation of the landscapes and the effect of other influences like rocks, structure and people.

2. Getting started

Teachers from the partner schools get in touch with each other and check their availability (days, times, contact addresses, etc.). The partners agree on a communication language.

Language:

Together with your pupils and your partner school, decide which language you will use to communicate with each other. It is easiest to use the language you teach in, but it might not be understood by your partner. Your pupils might refuse to be taught in any other language, so translation may be necessary. Try to find a pupil or some pupils to be in charge of translation. Find a language teacher to proofread, if necessary. Fortunately, scientific terms often are similar in different languages.

Preparing schools

Each partner should

- Identify landforms and landscapes they want to concentrate on, suited to their own needs.
- Check for curricular requirements and needs.
- Make a list of materials they will use.
- Plan and prepare fieldwork if needed.

3. Collecting and processing information

- Pupils should explore the Internet for the examples of landscapes in their region. They can use local web sites and relate to other places with similar landscapes. Keep a collection of web addresses (URLs).
- Pupils can collect further information on the formation of these types of landscapes. The online books might provide some useful explanations.
- The class should be organised into groups of 3-4 pupils.

- Google Earth and World Wind should be explored and images can be captured and emailed to the twinned groups or classes. GeoImages can also be used to find images similar to the landscapes under study from other locations.
- If a field visit is possible, photographs and video can be taken by pupils and then edited to be used in explaining the formation and for the travel brochure. Rocks and specimens can be collected and used.
- The groups of pupils should produce an illustrated travel brochure on the landscapes of their (home) region for a class of geography students of their own age. They should plan a tour of the places the class should visit and explain how the landscapes were formed.

4. Exchanging information and learning with and from others

Pupils email their leaflet to their partners. Another possibility would be to produce a web site which can be uploaded to the Internet.

Pupils discuss and explain to their partners about how their local landscapes and landforms were created, using chat/forum or videoconference. This means the pupils would have to prepare a 'mini-lesson' to teach their partner twinned group or class. This makes sure that they understand the topics so they can explain it to others. They can practice their mini-lesson on their own classmates.

Finally all the materials can be gathered from both twinned schools and presented as a class project on for example PowerPoint, a webpage or as a classroom display.

5. Follow up options

There are other possibilities for the partner schools to

Exchange information and learn with and from others

- Share photographs and URLs (Web site information) with partner class.
- Match groups of pupils so they share only their own leaflets, on similar or different themes, then the class can share all the leaflets at a later stage.
- Organise a chat or videoconference on what the groups would see and do if they were to visit the partner school region. It may be useful for pupils to prepare their guided tour of the region and they can chat about it online.
- Organise a discussion forum about the importance of landscape to the way people live in their region. This discussion forum could have threads for them to contribute to like travel and transport, jobs, tourism, farming, buildings and where they are located, forests, water resources and the way we live for example.

Go on working once the partnership is over

Groups of pupils in the partner schools could continue to share their weekend/leisure experiences and other aspects of their lives through email. This will of course also be related to the landscape they live in.

6. Evaluation:

There are various ways to evaluate the experience.

On a peer-to-peer level, you could reflect on how this collaboration improved the quality of your own teaching (methodology, material, etc.). Your findings could encourage other teachers at your school to do their own collaborative project.

Peer to peer:

- Think about the interactions between the classes and groups. What worked and what did not?
- Which advice was the most relevant and why?
- What could have been better and why?
- Which alternative activities could you have done?
- How else could you have organised the class?
- To which extent did the cooperation improve your skills?
- Would you recommend this project to other teachers - why or why not? etc.

Teacher to pupil:

On a teacher-to-pupil level, you could focus on evaluating the content. In particular it will be important for each pupil to reflect on what they have learned. Groups of pupils can reflect together on what they learned and instruct one another. You could also examine to which extent pupils profited from the collaborative work.

- What were the most significant outcomes of the project?
- What was learned and which gaps remain?
- Which other areas in an international context would they like to explore?
- What are the conclusions and consequences you can draw from them?

7. Useful links:

Google Earth <http://earth.google.com/>

Google Earth has a load of imagery and other geographic information. All sorts of locations can be visited where locations such as Mount St Helens and Paris can be explored. The satellite images and local facts alter as you move around and bookmarks and other aspects can be prepared to do a trail or tour. This provides a great opportunity to explore small and large landscapes and features and to discuss how they were created and their impact on people. The opportunities are almost limitless. An essential tool for geographers!

Geo-Images <http://www.sln.org.uk/geography/Images.htm>

Geography pictures and images of landscapes from the Staffordshire teacher network and this site includes an image of the month archive. This site also has lots of other interesting contributions from teachers, but is UK-orientated in curriculum terms. However, lots for geographers to use.

World Wind <http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov/>

World Wind lets you travel to any place on Earth, using Landsat satellite imagery and Radar Topography data. World Wind lets you experience and explore the Earth terrain

in 3D. This has the potential for studying physical processes on a large scale. The big drawback is that a high specification computer and fast broadband connection are required.

Karl Donert, UK pedagogical advisor for Spring Day in Europe (<http://www.springday2006.org>), has prepared this project kit.