

## My place through a lens

Using images taken by learners to explore how we see where we live.

KS2 | 60 Mins | Individual

KEY QUESTION: How would we choose to represent the place where we live?

### Background

Advances in digital photography have made photographs taken by learners an accessible and creative addition to a teachers' toolkit of activities. This activity uses learners' photographs to explore how we see where we live. What is it that we choose to represent and how do we represent it?

### Activity

1. The first part of this activity requires the gathering of images. There are various ways in which this could be done and this may depend on the nature of your school and community. Here are some ideas:

- Organise a walking tour from the school, along a route that has been predetermined by the class to include the different perspectives of those involved. Learners use cameras along the route to record things that are important to them about their place;
- Use a school digital camera and over a number of days/weeks (depending on how many cameras) send home with learners and ask them to take a photograph to bring in to school the following day;
- Set as a homework task with parents/carers supporting the gathering of images. The images could be submitted in various ways (including perhaps email for those that have access).

The focus of this activity is about the choices that are made. The quality of the image is a secondary concern. A basic digital camera or the camera function of a mobile phone will be sufficient in most cases.

You may wish to frame this activity by setting more of a task or question for the learners to think about when taking photographs. You could ask them to think about places that make them happy for example, or places that they would like to take a visitor. Leaving it more open can lead to some interesting results, but some learners may find this too challenging. In all instances learners should be asked to think about why they took certain photos and to reflect on those choices.

2. Once you have your photos, use questions or sorting-type activities to help engage pupils with the photographs they have generated. Here are some prompts that could form the basis of these analysis tasks:

If you could only choose one photo to represent where you live then which would you choose and why? You could use a diamond ranking activity to help you choose.

Looking at the photos you and others have taken can you sort them into different types of space? These could be:

- Social and Environmental spaces
- Individual and Community spaces
- Positive and Negative spaces
- Male and Female spaces
- What other combinations of spaces could you think of?
- Do learners always agree on how to categorise a space?
- What might make them see a space differently?
- What does this tell us about the relationship between place and identity?

3. Using a map of your community/area, locate the photos that learner have produced onto the map. This could take the form of a display to share with others in the school/community. Generate questions to help learners reflect on the map. These could include:

Are there areas that are well covered by photos, or poorly covered? Why might this be?

- Are there photos that show very different perspectives of the same part of the map? Why could this be?
- Do we know what the bits of our place not photographed are like?
- If we know places well, but chose not to photograph them, why might this be?
- What have we learnt about our place through this activity?

### Useful resource

A major photographic project in Birmingham divided the city into an enormous grid and asked people to submit photographs to represent their grid. The results produced a photographic collage of the city that was publicly displayed. The images have been stored and you can explore them for yourself using an interactive website developed to support the project.



Web Link

[http://www.birmingham-photographic-grid.org.uk/grid\\_map.html](http://www.birmingham-photographic-grid.org.uk/grid_map.html)



Extension Activity

If you have a nearby secondary school or college that offers photography courses, then you could extend this activity by working with their students.

This could take the form of buddying, or producing a photo brief to commission the students who then come back and present their images. Learners would then have to select images.

This extension would teach many visual literacy skills and give valuable insights into how the world we see around us is often produced.

- What does this mean for what we learn about any place?
- Who are the producers?
- What are they showing us?
- What are they not showing us?