

**RESOURCE LIBRARY**  
ACTIVITY : 40 MINS

## Important Places in Your Community

Students identify places in their local communities that are important to them. They use mental maps to analyze those places and how their personal experiences affect how they value those places.

**GRADES**

4, 5

**SUBJECTS**

*Geography, Human Geography*

## OVERVIEW

Students identify places in their local communities that are important to them. They use mental maps to analyze those places and how their personal experiences affect how they value those places.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/important-places-in-your-community/>

## DIRECTIONS

**1. Introduce mental maps.**

Explain to students that mental maps are the pictures in their minds of places. Tell students that mental maps change to reflect their experiences and feelings, and that people with different experiences may see the same space differently. Ask: *What are examples of using mental maps?* (giving directions; imagining distant places)

**2. Discuss different kinds of places and how different students feel about them.**

Have a whole-class discussion about places and their importance. Provide students with an

example of a place that is important to you. Then ask students to think about different kinds of places that are important to them. Provide them with the examples below. As you say each, ask students to rate its importance with a show of hands. Have students use a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being unimportant and 3 being very important. If students cannot agree on ratings, call on individual students to explain why it is important or unimportant to them.

- a park or other natural place
- a place of religious worship
- a museum or arts performance
- a sports park or amusement park
- an airport or bus station
- a shopping mall

Have students draw on their own experiences to add examples of their own and rate them.

### **3. Have students discuss why they feel differently about the importance of places.**

Point out that some places are important to many students, but some are important to fewer students. Discuss some of the reasons for this; for example, families come from different backgrounds and religions, they have different interests, or they live in different parts of the community. Ask students to provide more possible reasons.

### **4. Use mental maps to identify important places in your own community.**

Tell students that you now want them to focus on their local community; possibly their own neighborhood. Ask them to imagine all the different kinds of places in their community and where each is located. Have students put these mental maps on paper by drawing maps of their communities and labeling important places. Ask: *Which places are very important to you? Which places are very important to others, but not to you?* Make sure students understand that each of them places different value on different sites within their communities. Their ideas or others' ideas about important places are not wrong; just different. Help students to appreciate that people give varying importance to different places because of their personal experiences.

### **5. Have students trade drawings of favorite places.**

Ask each student to indicate their favorite place in their local community with a star. On the back of their maps, have students draw a picture of that favorite place. Have partners trade drawings and encourage each to state at least one reason they would like to visit a place they learned is special to another student, and why.

# Informal Assessment

Ask students to draw a picture of a place that they learned is special to another student and are curious about. Have students write a brief paragraph about the place and share why they would now like to visit that place.

## Extending the Learning

Use a map of your city or town to locate some of the places that students identified as important.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

### Geography

- Human Geography

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- rate the importance of places to them
- identify specific reasons people value certain places
- use mental maps to identify important places in their own neighborhood and community

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

## Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Remembering
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Organizing Geographic Information

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 3:

People, Places, and Environments

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 2:

How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context

- Standard 6:

How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

## Preparation

## What You'll Need

## MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Markers
- Paper

## REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Optional

# PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

# GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

# BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

## Background Information

Certain places in our communities mean more to us than others. Some of these places are important to many other people as well. Other places are important to only a few people. You can learn a lot about the things different people in our society value by thinking about the places that are important to you and to others.

## Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- [Important Places](#)

## Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
mental map	noun	an internal representation of a person's personal perceptions, knowledge, and thoughts about a geographic area.
place	noun	area having unique physical and human characteristics.

