

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 40 MINS

Soundscapes

Students discuss the natural and human-made sounds that help to define a sense of place. Then they go home to identify and collect sounds that define their home's sense of place.

GRADES

3 - 5

SUBJECTS

Geography, Human Geography

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OVERVIEW

Students discuss the natural and human-made sounds that help to define a sense of place. Then they go home to identify and collect sounds that define their home's sense of place.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/soundscape/>

DIRECTIONS

1. Have students think about the sounds they hear every day.

Ask: *When you are asked to describe where you live, what do you say? Do you describe the homes, shops, and businesses? Do you describe the people? The landscape? Explain to students that all of these natural and human-made things help to define a sense of place, or what makes a certain place have its own distinctive character. When people describe places,*

sound is often forgotten. But sound is often a major part of what makes a place special—what gives it a "sense of place." Ask: *Is there a sound that makes you think of your home? What is it? Why does it make you think of your home?*

2. Discuss how sounds define a sense of place.

Ask students to imagine another place they are familiar with, such as a grocery store, a bus stop, or a neighborhood park. Ask: *What are some of the distinctive sounds in those places?* Encourage students to think about what the grocery store would sound like without the sound of shopping carts clanging together in the cart corral and the beep of the checkout counters. Have them think about what a bus stop would sound like without the sound of the engine mixing with the whoosh of the doors opening; or the park without the sound of children playing. Ask: *Does the one sound that makes you think of your home define your home's sense of place?*

3. Ask students to listen to the sounds around them.

Have students close their eyes and listen to the sounds that surround them in the classroom. Remind them that they might hear natural sounds or sounds made by humans. They might hear the rustle of paper, buses or birds outside the window, or students talking in the hallway. All of these sounds build a soundscape. Explain that a landscape is made up of all of the different landforms, trees, houses, yards, and roads. A soundscape is made up of all of the different sounds that help to create a sense of place. Discuss the soundscape of your classroom.

4. Distribute worksheets and introduce the home activity.

Give each student a copy of the worksheet *Soundscapes: Types of Sounds*. Explain that their assignment is to go home and walk in and around their home or apartment for a few minutes, concentrating on all of the sounds that they hear. Have them write the following questions on the backs of their worksheets and think about them as they complete the activity.

- *What sounds do you hear?*
- *Are they natural, human-made, or the sound of humans and the environment interacting?*
- *What sounds do you hear that you don't usually pay attention to?*
- *How different would your home feel if those sounds were no longer part of the soundscape?*

Tell students they may have to walk around several times. Then they should complete the worksheet and try to choose the one special sound that helps define their home's sense of place.

5. Have students share their results.

Back in the classroom, have students share their home's sense of place and some of the distinctive natural sounds, human-made sounds, and sounds of humans and the environment interacting.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Human Geography

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify the sounds that create a sense of place in the classroom and where they live
- write descriptions of the sounds or record the sounds for others to hear
- identify the sounds as natural sounds, human-made sounds, or sounds of humans and the environment interacting

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Reflection

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills

- Analyzing
- Geographic Skills
- Acquiring Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 4:

The physical and human characteristics of places

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Pencils
- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Tech Setup: Audio recording device

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Home

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Use this activity on two consecutive days, assigning the take-home portion for the evening of Day 1.

In Practice

Find resources that show best teaching practices and example student outcomes for this activity.

MODEL STUDENT WORK

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

A particular place has its own distinctive character, or sense of place. Sounds help to create a sense of place. These sounds may include natural sounds, human-made sounds, and the sounds of humans and the environment interacting.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
landscape	<i>noun</i>	the geographic features of a region.
sense of place	<i>noun</i>	feeling or perception people associate with a particular area.

For Further Exploration

Websites

- [Science News for Kids: Sounds and Silence](#)

