PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY

Focus on challenging geography

Number 94 | Autumn 2017

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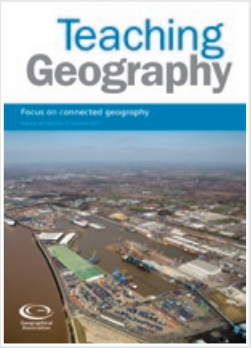
Starting out as a leader in geography

Laura-Jayne Ward

In this article Laura-Jayne offers new heads of department some thoughts from her experiences as a new leader in geography and advice on implementing change.



Water, water everywhere? Planning and building for future droughts

Martin Hurst

This article highlights how droughts are already a major risk in the UK. It discusses a major new independent study that has looked at the issue in detail, before making recommendations as to how planners, housebuilders, environmentalists, local government and consumers can all play a part in alleviating the risk. As the author points out, there is no single solution.

Geographical Association

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Geographical Association

FORTHCOMING ISSUE
Spring 2018: Focus on playful geography

EDITORIAL

STEPHEN PICKERING

Stephen Pickering.

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair' (Dickens, 1859).

There is a strong sense that we live in challenging times, politically, economically, environmentally and geographically. The fact that there are multiple periods in history, both recent and longer ago, where the same notion could be applied does not help pupils who are growing up in a time of uncertainty. Indeed, I remember growing up in the early 1970s and the thrill of having to cook and eat by candlelight because of power cuts and the three day working week. Those were challenging times, but for me as a child they were times of fun. We played lots of hide and seek and 'murder in the dark' games as a family. Such issues were not tackled in my classroom at school; we were too busy with Cuisinaire Rods and SRA reading schemes. I had no idea that there was a famine in Bangladesh as I trooped off to school each morning with my shorts and cold legs. Northern Ireland was downplayed as 'troubles'. I believe we now live in a world where news is fast and cheap. Some of the articles in this issue of *Primary Geography* clearly demonstrate how socio-economic world geography is rightly taking its place in our primary classrooms today. It has to, because the pupils see such stories from around the world via the mass and social media. Perhaps we as teachers should question whether increased knowledge leads to better understanding; logic suggests it should. If pupils are better informed then they are better able to form judgements. The major challenge facing pupils today is based on the quality, type and style of the knowledge received. A news article may report that two hundred 'refugee migrants' attempted to board lorries last week at Calais, but it is unlikely to tell us the stories of these individuals; of how they came to be there, of their families, hopes, aspirations and history. News items tend to de-personalise the issue and this has an impact on our understanding and our response to the stories. I believe that as teachers and educators we have a responsibility to provide the opportunities for pupils to put the hard facts of news items into a meaningful, personalised context.

This journal is full of exciting ways to meet some of these challenges. I am really pleased that, through a content-driven curriculum, the place of thinking skills and challenging pupils to reach their own opinions and make their own judgements seems to be the overarching theme issuing from the articles here, which demonstrate the following key values.

The value of affective learning

The pedagogy of personalising issues is explored in a range of different ways. Sarah James turns de-humanised facts about migration from Syria into real-life stories, with the pupils as the decision makers for their families, in her article 'Pack your bags'. Chris Cooper and Nicky Easey follow a similar route by 'Making Sense of Europe' through drama: they describe how 'drama has the power to embody abstract concepts and data into the lives and actions of people'.

The value of creativity and imagination

How about creating your own landscape? Just grab a bedsheet and a pile of stuff on a table and there you go… Jon Cannell attended a session led by Sharon Witt and Helen Clarke at the 2017 GA Annual Conference and was inspired to expand upon and share this creative idea. Developing an understanding of landscapes is taken to a much larger scale by Emily Rotchell's students, who challenged young pupils to investigate how the world as a sphere can be represented accurately on a flat surface. Gordon MacLellan, a story-teller by trade, explores rivers with pupils through the eyes, thoughts and artwork of trouts; binding affective and creative learning through art.

The value of pupils' thoughts and opinions

Richard Greenwood challenged pupils to think differently about an emotive subject: the destruction of woodland to make way for housing. And how about promoting debate through silence? Think it can't be done? Find out about every teacher's dream lesson: developing independence, discussion and forming opinion in silence by reading about the work that Stephen Ellis and Michael McCarthy tried with their classes. Susan Pike explores how some of Vygotsky's theories are predicated on pupils having opportunities to discuss and debate. Everyone learns differently: even with the more mechanistic knowledge acquisition, the manner in which we learn and indeed the facts that we end up remembering vary. Many of the articles challenge this way of learning with a focus on opinion and valuing debate. Verity Jones makes learning memorable by making links between floods and deserts via nappies: a challenging connection indeed.

Challenge occurs at home and overseas. Richard Woolley reports on his research undertaken with Janice Morris, which identified a large range of picture books teachers can use that reflect the diverse nature of families and family groups that exist in our primary schools. If it is still true that 'Education influences and reflects the values of society, and the kind of society we want to be' (DfEE/QCA 1999, p.11) then these resources are important for our primary school teachers. Alice Mobley takes a reflective look at her career, from a busy primary school in the centre of Birmingham to a similarly busy one in Dubai: if you have ever dreamed of challenging yourself to live and work abroad then this is the article for you.

The challenge is to provide pupils with opportunities to discover, to hold on to and to celebrate this amazing world that we inhabit, to understand that there is complexity in the world and the part we all have to play in it.

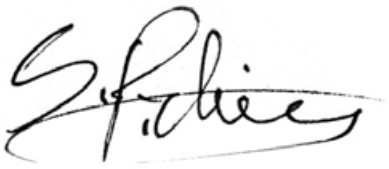
References

DfEE/QCA (1999) *The National Curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England*. London: DfEE/QCA.

Dickens, C. (1859) *A Tale of Two Cities*. London: Chapman and Hall.

WEB RESOURCES

Download ideas below for using the *PG* front cover: *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

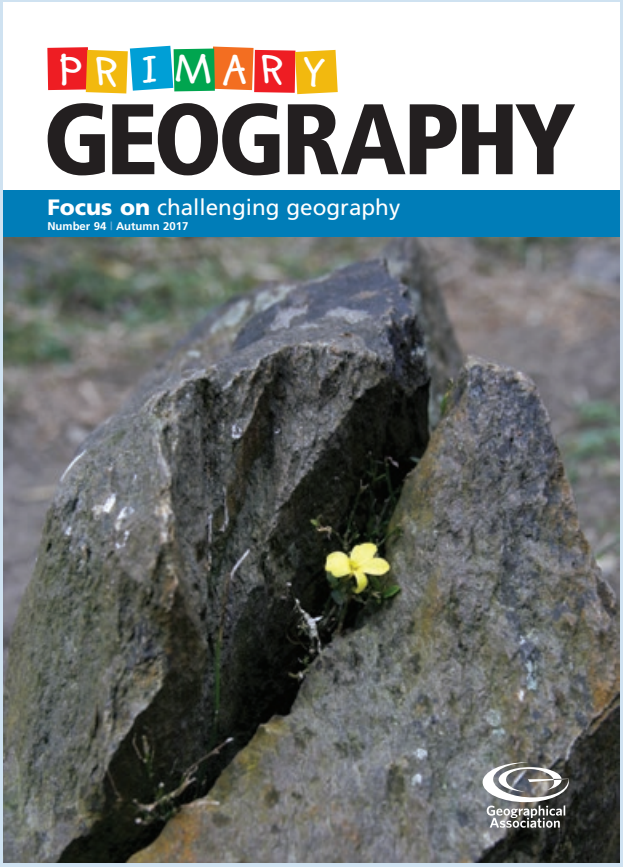


Using the front cover

This tiny little yellow flower is engaged in a tremendous battle for survival. It is young, fragile and determined. The flower is pitting its wits and strength against hard rock, harsh weather and a lack of nutrient and soil. This is challenge indeed.

We chose this image to represent challenging geography. There are many geography-based topics that can challenge pupils and this journal provides a range of ideas and challenging topic areas. A good way to encourage pupils to think deeply about issues and challenges is to ask them to choose an image – or better still, draw one – that depicts the challenge in an abstract way: this is important as it encourages thinking about the core of the issues rather than just a search for a related image. This provides opportunities for pupils to discuss and illustrate personal perspectives. There are no wrong or right answers here, but the images could raise some interesting discussion points or a focus for a 'Philosophy for Children' exercise.

Challenges come in many shapes and forms, and vary from person to person. I vividly remember trying to explain to a year 6 pupil that the map of Great Britain we were looking at was actually where we live and that the blue was the sea and ocean that surround us; but she told me that she had never been to the seaside and so she didn't know what it looked like. The challenge of understanding the world, scale and place can be very daunting for young pupils for whom a one hour drive to the seaside can seem like a journey across the world. Help the pupils rise to such a challenge by drawing the world on the playground with chalks and getting the pupils to measure distances between places – have they seen how big the Pacific Ocean is? How many hours would it take them to reach Sydney, Australia, if they travelled 100 miles an hour? They can plan holidays, they can label the different biomes with sunny heads with shades or wintry ones with hats and scarves, or annotate different vegetation alongside the biome labels: such a challenge could expand in many different directions. Such a lesson could follow on from the ideas that Emily Rotchell describes in her article (pp. 16–17).



Stephen Ellis, the inspirational Assistant Head teacher behind the Silent Debate article (pp. 7–9), rose to the challenge of connecting pupils between Amman and Wandsworth where he teaches, in order to learn from each other, understand the challenges pupils face living in London and also living in Jordan, and develop a powerful curriculum based on mutual learning and understanding. Perhaps the next stage for this connecting classrooms project is for the pupils to share and describe their own 'challenging images' like the tiny yellow flower growing through the rock.

The start gallery

CHALLENGING GEOGRAPHY

STEPHEN PICKERING

Stephen provides ideas for getting started with exploring the geography of challenging news reports.

What's in the news?

As you can see from many of the articles in this, and previous, issues of *Primary Geography*, there seems to be an increasing desire – or perhaps need – to discuss topics and issues in the news.

Set up a display board of world news and encourage pupils to add sticky notes of news items that they have seen or heard about and wish to discuss.

If the display board has a world map as a background or a centrepiece, the news items can be located on the appropriate part of the world. This helps pupils to learn the location of countries around the world while building a context around their locational knowledge.

The display is most effective if it is used regularly, so the next stage is to set up a regular slot to discuss the news items. Clearly, the format will vary depending upon the age of your pupils and the school's own routines, but the following ideas can help aid the discussion.

Watch the news

At the school that *Primary Geography* author Sarah James (see pages 10–11) teaches in, the pupils watch *Newsround* as a whole class each day; a super way to help pupils engage with and discuss news from around the world.

Put on your hats

Try discussing the news using Edward De Bono's thinking hats (see web panel). Rather than simply asking the pupils to 'put their thinking hats on', ask them to put different coloured thinking hats on in order to review the news from different perspectives (Figure 1).

The white hat – only things that we know are true.

The yellow hat – brightness and optimism. Look for positives.

The black hat – judgement. Look for difficulties or dangers. (Some people see this as 'the devil's advocate' hat.)

The red hat – feelings and emotions.

The green hat – creativity. Look for new ideas.

Figure 1: De Bono's Thinking Hats can help pupils focus on specific perspectives in relation to the news.

This helps pupils to develop the ability to think from a different perspective and thus to develop longer discussions or written work. Sometimes it helps to put the same colour hat on all the pupils at the same time. Initially, perhaps they could all react to a news story emotively (red hat), then swap to a green hat and look for new ideas or creative solutions to how people could react to the news item. On other occasions, try a discussion with groups of pupils wearing different hats. In this way a discussion could develop between positive aspects and words of caution, for example. Although you may like to have real different coloured hats (the pupils could create the hats), you can use imaginary hats for these activities.

Developing dialogue and discussion

Paula Owens' activity ideas (Owens, 2015) provide an excellent way of investigating what pupils think about the wider world and of developing dialogue and discussion. Through a process of initial thoughts, making meaning – investigating the news items in greater detail – and finally creating dialogue pupils get used to structuring their thinking and knowledge on how to approach an issue.

Reference

Owens, P. (2015) 'The Start Gallery', *Primary Geography*, 87, p. 5.

WEB RESOURCES

De Bono's Thinking Hats: *www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php*

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CHALLENGING GEOGRAPHY THROUGH SILENT DEBATE

STEPHEN ELLIS AND MICHAEL MCCARTHY

In this article Stephen and Michael explain how a Silent Debate can deepen the pupils' thinking on a controversial geographical issue: deforestation in Amazonia.

Critical thinking

One of our Learning Challenges for year 4, entitled 'Precious Amazonia!', is a wonderfully engaging topic that the pupils always enjoy. They love learning about the geography of Amazonia and its complex ecosystem, but the pupils have developed a single-minded view about its destruction caused through deforestation. As a result, they suggest that this deforestation is harming the planet and should be stopped. This is an understandable position for 8–9-year-olds to take, but it indicated that they were failing to consider all the viewpoints associated with deforestation in Amazonia. Our approach to teaching about this controversial issue was imbalanced in terms of supporting our pupils' thinking.

As part of our professional development, we took part in a 'Connecting Classrooms' course on Critical Thinking, funded by the British Council and facilitated by the Geographical Association. During the course, we came across a critical thinking strategy called the 'Silent Debate'. Having only seen one such debate in action, although we thought it might be a useful approach in the classroom, we were reticent about diving into one with year 4, so we hatched a plan to use the staff as 'guinea pigs'. On the first day back in January, we devised a Silent Debate around a contemporary yet contentious issue. We trawled the web for mere seconds to create the most toxic set of comments concerning 'Brexit' we could find. The comments were stuck onto large sheets of paper and placed around the room. We asked staff to move around the room responding to these comments silently, writing their responses underneath each 'Brexit' comment. After 15 minutes of silent thinking, staff shared their responses and we asked them to voice their views and comment on other people's opinions. All the staff enjoyed the process and have planned to incorporate this strategy into their own teaching.

Now feeling more confident with using the technique, we could not wait to try a Silent Debate out on year 4.

The three key features of Silent Debate are that it is:

1. Effective – it avoids the common mistake of seeing one side of an issue
2. Novel – it involves thinking in new ways
3. Self-directed – it involves thinking independently rather than being controlled by, for example, the teacher (Taevere, 2016).

This critical thinking strategy supports pupils to see an issue from different viewpoints, to be open to new evidence, and to reason, deduce and infer conclusions from the facts available. The question of whether it could be the strategy that would to help bring greater balance to our approach to teaching about deforestation in Amazonia was pertinent. As teachers, we wanted to deepen the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the controversial activities taking place in Amazonia by helping them to think critically through the various economic, political, social and environmental viewpoints associated with deforestation.

Setting the scene

Like all critical thinking strategies, a Silent Debate should be employed in the context of the subject matter (Willingham, 2007). Therefore, in setting the scene it was essential to immerse the pupils in the subject matter of Amazonia through such questions as:

- Where is Amazonia?
- What is it like?
- What is its weather and climate like?
- How is Amazonia connected to other places?
- How is Amazonia changing?
- How is Amazonia similar and different to our school locality?
- What would it feel like to live in Amazonia?

To support the questions we used a YouTube video entitled 'Rainforest deforestation and its effects', high quality images of the Amazon Rainforest ecosystem and economic activities associated with it, atlases and globes to help the pupils develop their locational knowledge of the region, and a video from the Literacy Shed outlining the impact of deforestation (see web panel). We then set up the Silent Debate.

The rules of the silent debate were explained, and the process modelled. Photo © Stephen Ellis.

Setting up and running a Silent Debate

1. Place a large sheet of paper with an image and/or statement on each table.
2. Explain that pupils, in groups, may start at any table they wish, but they must write a paragraph either for or against the image or statement. The first time pupils do the activity, you could provide them with a scaffold in the form of sentence starters and phrases to build or refute an argument.
3. Once the pupils have worked at two or three different tables give them an opportunity to refute the arguments other pupils have written. Model this if necessary. Pupils can then continue to move around the different tables writing alternative viewpoints.
4. Emphasise that the activity must be carried out in silence. The pupils' pencils do the talking!

The Great Amazon Debate

When teaching any critical thinking strategy, it is important to make it explicit (Willingham, 2007). To this end, we explained the main aims of carrying out a Silent Debate and ensured that we modelled how it worked. The pilot activity carried out with the staff prior to introducing it to year 4 certainly helped us to be explicit in our approach.

Once the images/statements were distributed, the pupils were let loose on a Silent Debate, which we called 'The Great Amazon Debate'. First, we asked each group (they work in ability groups) to provide a key at the top of the sheet so that we could tell who had been contributing without making the pupils talk. Second, we gave each group a statement to match the photograph/image. We then put 15 minutes on the interactive white board timer and off they went. The pupils were asked to concentrate on arguing for or against and giving reasons for their opinions. Where possible, they could use the argument stems we had provided to agree or disagree with others' comments. This task was carried out in total silence.

At first, it was a free-for-all: the pupils were just writing for the sake of it. After four minutes, we reminded them to read too. The class readily began to debate by writing with passion, retorts and responses galore. During this time, we walked around, adding our own questions to pupils' comments to extend their thinking. This helped to avoid the teacher interrupting a pupil's train of thought. Once the 15 minutes was up, we let the pupils discuss their work for one minute before moving them to another table to look, read and respond to other groups' work – again silently.

Time for verbalising

Following this we held a non-silent debate, starting with one of the statements, then moving on until all of the images/statements had been covered. Here, a highlight was that the pupils could respond to points without having ever heard them. For example, pupils from table A responded to table B's points, which they had misinterpreted. This meant that table B could clarify their points, and we could question them further. As these tables are at opposite ends of the room, the pupils had to visit each other's tables to read and absorb their ideas. This is quite impressive – in a normal debate, the pupils may not have considered their peers ideas. Moreover, we did not need to spend time listening to the more verbose pupils or have to coax out ideas from the quieter ones. We could see that asking pupils to create and write down their ideas had been time well spent. The activity itself improved the quality of the whole-class debate and the pupils' understanding of the issue of deforestation in Amazonia. Because this Silent Debate allowed our pupils to think independently while working collaboratively, it proved an effective way of engaging the whole class in sharing their knowledge and understanding of a controversial issue.

The pupils were given the opportunity to refute the arguments other pupils had written. Photo © Stephen Ellis.

Going deeper as critical thinkers

We wanted to take the Silent Debate idea further to find out if the pupils could become deeper critical thinkers by letting them write their own. Willingham (2007) describes how practising a critical thinking strategy can support pupils in deeper thinking. With this in mind we posed the question: 'Should deforestation be allowed to continue in Amazonia?'

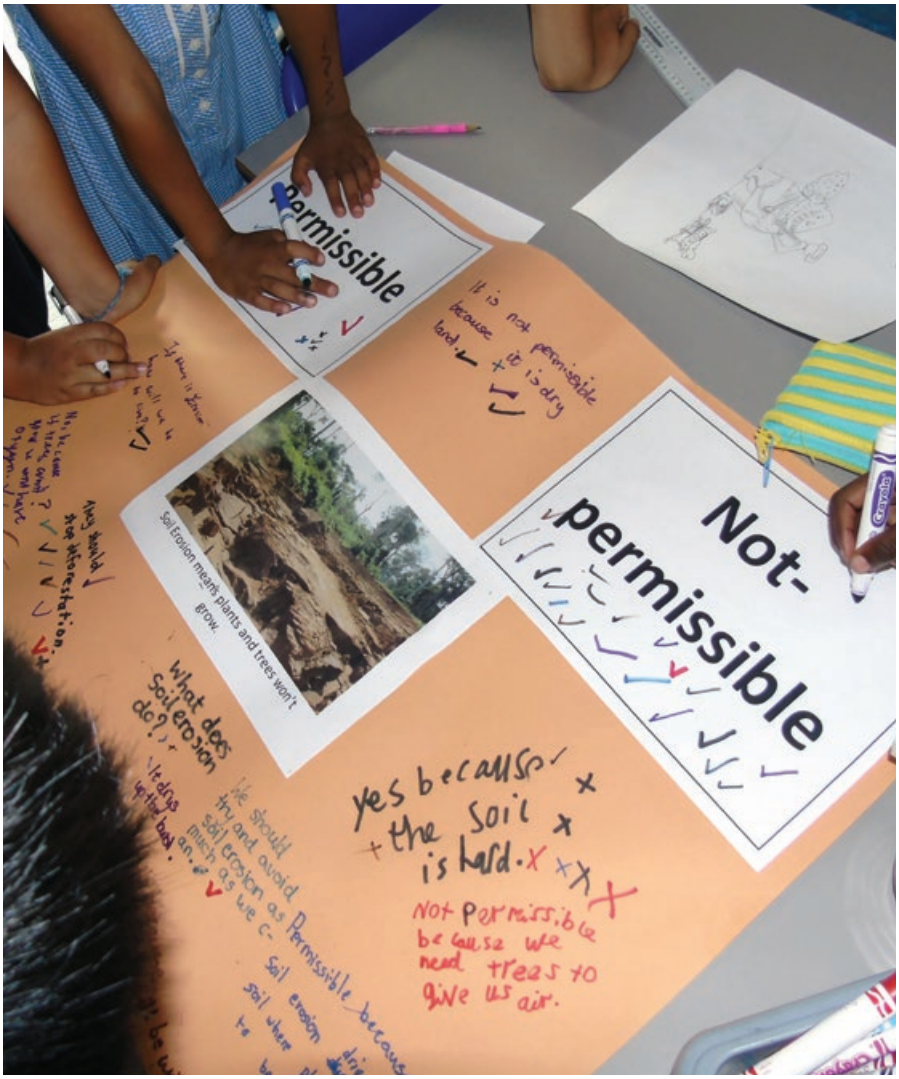
In order to help the pupils in this task, we provided additional high-quality images showing the main political, social, economic and environmental issues associated with deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest. Each image was stuck to a large piece of sugar paper with the words 'permissible' and 'not permissible' in a chart beneath each image. To support the pupils' interpretation, we annotated the images with words and phrases such as 'farming', 'mining', 'jobs', 'cattle ranch', 'lungs of Earth', 'soils', 'erosion' and 'habitats'. In mixed ability groups, the pupils were free to discuss silently what they would write about their particular image.

By now the whole class was confident in carrying out a Silent Debate, so we gave them 30 minutes in order to allow them to think more critically. They were asked to write a sentence or a paragraph about the image then say whether it showed an activity that was permissible or not by recording their views in a chart below the image.

We were amazed what the pupils wrote: they showed that they could empathise with each image, and, as a result, give a more balanced view of the arguments for and against deforestation in Amazonia. Their thinking appeared to be more critical of the issues observed, and it was obvious that they were using their prior knowledge to make informed judgements about deforestation in Amazonia.

Following the Silent Debate, we returned to the question 'Should deforestation be allowed to continue in Amazonia?', discussing the arguments for and against its practice. Throughout this discussion we were encouraged to see that the majority of pupils were beginning to process the complexity and were showing signs that they could appreciate the main reasons why the controversial practice of deforestation occurred.

When we held a class vote on whether deforestation should be allowed to continue in the Amazon, the pupils overwhelmingly voted that it should, adding that it would have to be controlled. By adding this caveat, the majority of pupils understood the complexity of the issue and empathised with the different viewpoints associated with deforestation in Amazonia.



For the second silent debate pupils were given 30 minutes to undertake the task, to allow them to think more critically. Photo © Stephen Ellis.

The impact

We felt that the Silent Debate critical thinking strategy had a number of impacts. First, as a result of using this strategy all pupils became aware of the different viewpoints around deforestation in Amazonia. Second, the majority were able to think and write about the main economic, political, social and environmental issues more critically. Third, the pupils were able to carry out their own Silent Debate around the deforestation issue using high-quality images, the chart and their own prior knowledge. Fourth, the majority of pupils were able to ask a range of higher order questions and write a more balanced argument for the control of deforestation in Amazonia. Before embarking on this critical thinking, our pupils were not always able to appreciate the complexities behind it.

Teaching a controversial geographical issue effectively has always been a challenge for teachers. As we have demonstrated, a Silent Debate can enhance pupils' thinking, enable them to problem-solve and support their understanding of different viewpoints.

The next time you are faced with the choice of teaching challenging geography, why not try a Silent Debate? Shh!

References

Taevere, A. (2016) *Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Luxury or necessity?* London: British Council.

Willingham, D. (2007) 'Critical thinking: why is it so hard to teach?', *American Educator*, Summer, p. 18.

WEB RESOURCES

Literacy Shed: *www.literacyshed.com*

Silent Debate pedagogy: (Tide) *www.tidegloballearning.net/resources/silent-debate*; (Try This Teaching) *www.trythisteaching.com/2013/03/silent-debate/* and (Pedagoo) *www.pedagoo.org/silent-debating/*

YouTube video: *https://youtube/AVh2DEgpvsM*

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'PACK YOUR BAG, WE'RE MOVING!'

SARAH JAMES

Here, Sarah explores how confronting the challenge of teaching pupils about refugees and migration can create a solid awareness of our changing world.

Throughout my experiences in schools, I have been shocked at the lack of pupil awareness about the changing world around them, and their ready acceptance of 'bite-size' news headlines as the total truth. When spending time in schools, I saw limited teaching of current world events, which made me curious as to whether pupils could grasp the complexity of different world events and can empathise with people's experiences that are very different from their own. The National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) states that high quality geography teaching should 'inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people'. Pupils are citizens of this world as much as anyone else; therefore, teachers are responsible for exploring how pupils' fascination with the world around them affects how they interact with it.

Through my Primary Teaching degree, I had the opportunity to conduct research with year 3 pupils into whether the medium of role play could be used to challenge their perceptions of recent world events. I chose to focus on the Syrian Refugee Crisis, which led to some fascinating results. I used a range of role-play activities in order to scaffold the pupils' learning and their interactions through a range of direct and indirect experiences (Martin, 2005). Clapper (2010) describes how those who are involved in role play are also actively involved in the construction of their own learning. This approach enhances pupils' critical thinking skills, especially when used in conjunction with good facilitator questioning techniques. Clapper (2010) recognises that, as well as requiring critical thinking skills, a role play challenges learners on emotional levels, because they are thinking about someone else's point of view. Before the session, I interviewed the pupils to discover what they knew about refugees. Most of them stated that they 'knew nothing'. Also, when I asked if they liked role play, the majority said that they would not know what to say, or would find it difficult to get into character.

Setting the scene

To set the scene, I read the pupils a story of the first weeks of the crisis in Syria, and how it spiralled into civil war. After the scene was set, the pupils split into groups of six. Each pupil was designated a role as a family member (e.g. pupil a: Mother, pupil b: Father, pupil c: Child, and so on), and the groups were given situations the pupils would discuss in role as that family member. This proved most insightful because, through their discussions, the pupils demonstrated a range of skills, including critical thinking, evaluating and persuasive arguing. Even though the majority of pupils had said they found role play difficult, everyone became involved and engaged enthusiastically with their character's point of view.

Getting into character

The first activity the pupils were tasked with was to imagine the family could only afford for three family members to travel to England from Syria. First, they had to discuss who would escape. This extract from one group's discussion demonstrated that all the pupils became actively involved:

Through their discussions, the pupils demonstrated a range of skills, including critical thinking, evaluating and persuasive arguing. Photo © Sarah James.

Pupil in role as Child –

'I would be really, really, scared and if I might get killed then I think I should go. It is clearly not safe and I'm the youngest so if Dad dies I won't be able to do anything for myself'.

Pupil in role as Father

'No. I think I should go; I don't want to be killed! You know what? I think that Granny should stay because look at her, she's had a good life and could die at any second, they are after me so I am obviously the most important'.

Pupil in role as Granny

'I agree with your father. I think that I should stay here. I am going to die anyway and you young folk should be free. I can hide away and not be caught, I am sneaky like that!'

The pupils were clearly comfortable in the use of role play to question and challenge each other's rationale and answers. Photo © Sarah James.

It was interesting to see the pupils critically thinking through, logically, the emotional reasons for and against why each member should or should not escape from the conflict. The development of their arguments indicated the pupils were thinking about the ramifications for the whole family. For example, one pupil in role as Mother, said:

> 'Well I will have to go with the children because Dad can't cook!'

This demonstrated that the pupils were able to relate their thinking to real-life situations, expressing and arguing their points of view using contextual knowledge of families. This surprised me because it ran contrary to the pupils' negativity about becoming involved in role play. Instead, the pupils were clearly comfortable in the use of role play to question and challenge each other's rationale and answers. They were thinking outside the constraints of a traditional class discussion. I had not considered that pupils would use such in-depth critical thinking to challenge each other's responses while contemplating what a family would have to take into account in order to survive. In my experience this could only be achieved through role play because, when leading a class discussion, I had not previously encountered this level of consideration and reflection.

Packing to leave

Asking individual pupils to take on a specific role gave them the opportunity to develop a deep emotional connection with that character. Through this they explored what it would be like to face the decisions a Syrian refugee family faces. The pupils' empathy was evident when they discussed what to take in their suitcase with only ten minutes to pack. Two pupils (in different groups) in-role as Children both demonstrated an increasing understanding of a family having to cope with the emotional impact of being forced to move from their home and facing permanent separation:

> Pupil A in role as Child –
>
> 'I would want to take my teddy to keep me company because... I would be sad that I don't live at home anymore. I think I would take a photo of my family too, because if Granny doesn't come with us I might forget her'.
>
> Pupil F in role as Child –
>
> 'I would take a book, so I don't have to see anything scary and I like reading'.

This aspect of emotion was particularly interesting, because I had not divulged to the pupils whether the family members would see each other again or not.

Impacts

Through these lessons, I discovered that pupils are both curious to find out more about the world around them and able to respond to different tasks with maturity and logic. Through research around the topic and discussions with colleagues, I became aware that teachers are apprehensive about teaching sensitive or controversial issues (Oxfam, 2006). My work identified that role play allows pupils to explore other perspectives and to develop a deeper understanding of the world. Geography is critical in this, because it helps pupils become well-rounded individuals with balanced opinions. The value of pupils' empathy with other people is often a core value to a school's ethos (Lambert, 2013). Because schools are governed by moral purpose, geography teachers should help pupils prepare for their adult lives by learning tolerance and respect (DfE, 2014).

This research has had a huge impact on my pedagogy: I feel confident about introducing controversial issues in the classroom to explore with my pupils. Currently, I work with the whole of key stage 2. We watch *Newsround* after lunch and then discuss the main stories. It is very rewarding as pupils gradually become better able to express their opinion and develop understanding and empathy.

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INTERTWINED STORIES: MAKING SENSE OF EUROPE

CHRIS COOPER AND NICKY EASEY WITH BEN BALLIN

In the lead-up to the June 2016 European Union referendum, The Wroxham School in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, decided to work with outside practitioners to bring together drama, history and geography to explore the complex issues involved. Here, Chris, Nicky and Ben explain their approach as an example that other schools looking to engage with global realities in a meaningful, accessible way can use without over-simplifying the complexities.

At The Wroxham School, we had been discussing how we could support our year 5 and 6 classes to gain an understanding of the vote on whether Britain should stay in the EU or leave. We did not particularly want to examine the stay/leave vote route because we were aware that it was a complicated and, for some families, contentious issue. We decided to contact Ben and Chris to deliver some workshops to help our pupils develop an understanding of the history behind the European Union. We had worked with Ben before via the GA, so we were confident that he would devise something to deepen the pupils' knowledge in a meaningful way.

Humanising issues and ideas

Chris and Ben sought to find a way of making the geography and history involved three-dimensional, using the human dimension that drama makes available. 'Europe' has a physical, cultural, social, historical and political reality, but is also a concept. Drama has the power to embody abstract concepts and data into the lives and actions of people, just like you and me.

We explored these concepts through the story of two people: Friedrich, a refugee from Germany who came to the UK at the end of the Second World War; and 7-year-old migrant, Maya, crossing the bridge over the River Bosphorus in Istanbul in 2016, a bridge that literally connects East and West. Friedrich and Maya may be separated by time and generations, language and culture, but what connects them today?

Three guiding principles underpinned the workshop. First, drama is enactive: we learn through doing. Second, we were not looking for the right answer, nor to transmit our own understanding to the pupils. You cannot give understanding to anyone: they have to feel it for themselves. Instead, we were operating in what Dorothy Heathcote calls 'the Crucible Paradigm': the 'child as crucible', whereby pupils, (see web panel Mantle of the Expert) adults and peers stir knowledge around together so that we can create the meaning for ourselves, guided by what is of interest to us within the wealth of material made available. The 'crucible paradigm' demands that co-learners collaborate in a space where young people are taken seriously by adults and each other. Third, there was purpose to the learning within the fictional context: the pupils were given the urgent task of helping both Friedrich and Maya make sense of their situation and the world, and by doing so safely making sense of their own situation and the present-day world.

Home, identity and two stories

We began by working with the year 5 and 6 groups together, asking the pupils: What makes us feel at home? What makes home? What makes us who we are? Home and identity are central concepts in what follows.

The pupils were introduced to Friedrich (teacher in-role) in 1946, aged 7, at a checkpoint between East and West in Germany. They were asked to 'read' his behaviour and then relate this to being at home. What is he on the threshold, the border, of? We fed what happened to Germany at the end of the Second World War into the reflection, to deepen the frame.

We then jumped forward 70 years to Maya on the bridge over the Bosphorus (teacher in-role again) as she takes 'steps towards Europe'. What is Maya on the threshold of? And what is she moving towards, or looking back at?

We then set a task for year 6 for the rest for the morning (with year 5 listening in). We shared an email from Friedrich to the Head teacher at Wroxham. Friedrich is now 77 and has been living here, in Potters Bar, for some years. Friedrich asks year 6s to help him to explain his journey (which is also the journey of Europe) to his own 7-year-old grandchildren, who have been asking where he came from, how he came here, and what all the talk about the referendum means. He needs the pupils to help him answer the questions:

- What is Europe?
- Why might this matter to him and his grandchildren?

Year 6 went with their teacher to answer these questions using a wide assortment of material provided, such as maps, charts, graphs, extracts from articles, and so on.

Planning a journey

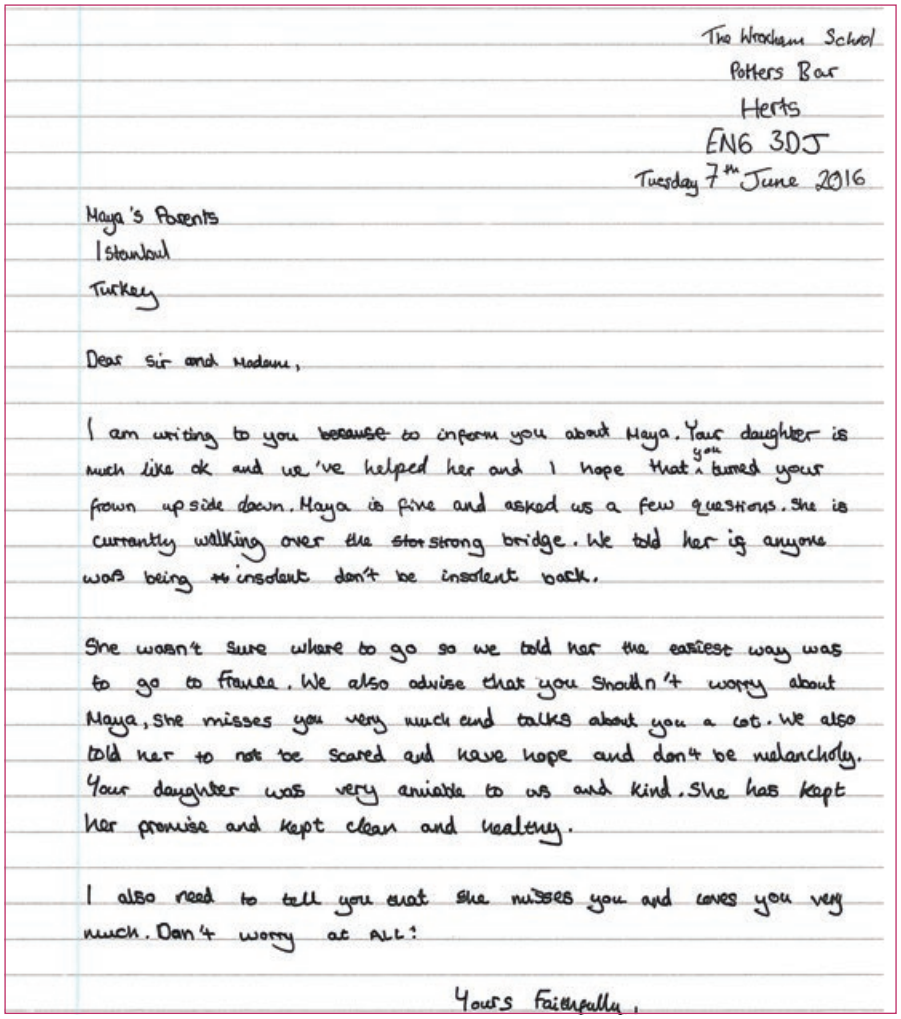
The year 5 pupils stayed to explore Maya's story. They built 'photos' (still images) based on titles such as 'a family celebration' and 'playing with friends' and showed them to her (teacher in-role) and saw Maya react to her own life. The pupils questioned Maya about her 'home' and asked where she wanted to make a home in the future:

- Where can she go?
- How can she get there?

We then shifted to research mode using images, maps (including the different routes used by migrants and travellers of various kinds), video and audio clips, press cuttings, postcards, tourist information, train and ferry timetables, as well as information about entry requirements for visitors to specific countries.

1. Each pupil researched a country and made the case for whether it would be a suitable place for her to go.
2. In five groups, we planned possible journeys, looking at factors such as currency, documentation, routes, border arrangements (e.g. Schengen), who lives in those places and their language and culture. Each group was asked to provide Maya with the resources to travel to their chosen country (including a timetable, a route plan, ways of obtaining money and access to documentation).

At the end of the session, the year 5 pupils presented their plans to Maya. Maya asked them to write to her parents letting them know that she was okay and telling them what she was planning to do. After lunch, this became the in-class task with the classroom teacher (Figure 1).



The Wroxham School
Potters Bar
Herts
EN6 3DJ
Tuesday 7th June 2016

Maya's Parents
Istanbul
Turkey

Dear sir and Madam,

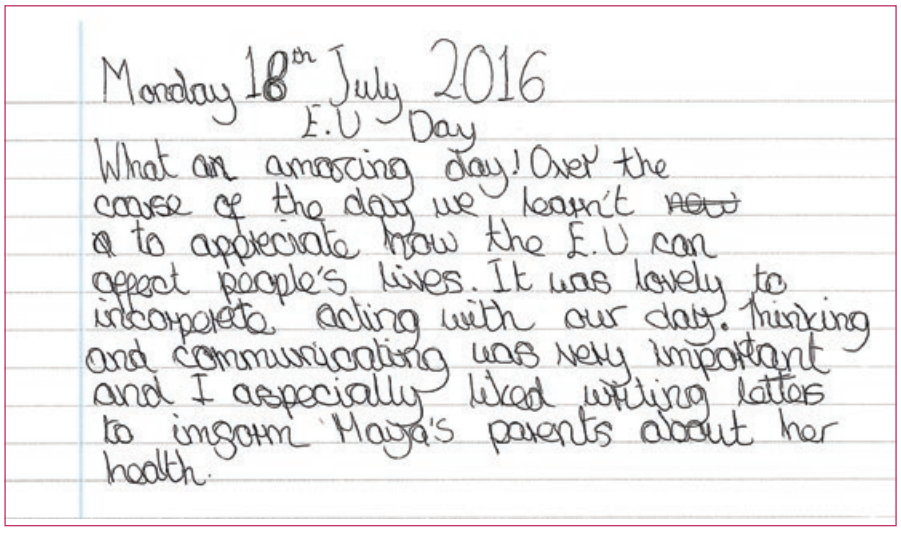
I am writing to you because to inform you about Maya. Your daughter is much like ok and we've helped her and I hope that you turned your frown upside down. Maya is five and asked us a few questions. She is currantly walking over the strong bridge. We told her if anyone was being insolent don't be insolent back.

She wasn't sure where to go so we told her the easiest way was to go to France. We also advise that you shouldn't worry about Maya, she misses you very much and talks about you a lot. We also told her to not be scared and have hope and don't be melancholy. Your daughter was very aniable to us and kind. She has kept her promise and kept clean and healthy.

I also need to tell you that she misses you and loves you very much. Don't worry at ALL!

Yours Faithfully,

Figure 1: The approach included the opportunity to practise letter-writing skills.



Monday 18th July 2016
E.U Day
What an amazing day! Over the course of the day we learn't ~~how~~ to appreciate how the E.U can effect people's lives. It was lovely to incorporate acting with our day. Thinking and communicating was very important and I especially liked writing letters to inform Maya's parents about her health.

Figure 2: The pupils' feedback was really positive and demonstrated how engaged they had been in the work.

Presenting ideas

In the afternoon year 6 returned to meet the older Friedrich (teacher in-role) and began by sharing what they had learned. Friedrich then asked the pupils about the forthcoming Referendum. Using a variety of sources, including data and material (e.g. newspaper headlines), the pupils began to construct a response.

As year 6 presented a response to Friedrich's question, year 5 joined us and then presented to Maya (teacher in-role) what they had written to her parents. It was very moving.

Finally, the pupils stepped into the roles of both Maya and Friedrich. We heard what they had been thinking, but did not say, to themselves, to each other and to the pupils of Wroxham.

Engagement and learning

The pupils were fully engaged in the separate class workshops, sharing ideas and thoughts with each other and the adults present (Figure 2). They enjoyed interacting with the other year group at the end of the afternoon, during the presentations to the teachers in-role.

Later in the week, several pupils shared that they gone home and engaged in debates with their families about the issues raised during these workshops. One parent commented that their child had impressed them with her knowledge of the European Union and how she persisted in finding out the views of various members of her family.

As a school, we were delighted with how deeply the pupils immersed themselves in the activities throughout the day, which culminated in the presentations. The empathy that the pupils showed for characters was particularly impressive and often quite moving. They were able to articulate their thoughts and ideas competently. We believe that we had equipped the pupils to begin to make an informed decision about the EU vote.

Blending powerful process drama with geography in this way helped the pupils develop a 'felt understanding' of the complex issues involved, while offering them a meaning-filled purpose for accessing factual information about places, locations and processes.

WEB RESOURCES

Learning Through Theatre:
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=FecdAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA56&lpg=PA56&dq#v=onepage&q&f=false
Mantle of the Expert:
www.mantleoftheexpert.com
School blog about the workshop:
http://year5.thewroxham.org.uk/eu-experience/

At the time of the workshop, Nicky Easey was Deputy Head teacher, Key Stage Phase Leader and Year 5 class teacher at The Wroxham School. Chris Cooper is an international specialist in Drama and Theatre in Education, working across the world as a facilitator, director, playwright and consultant. Chris and Ben have just developed a new programme for primary schools exploring child labour and the chocolate trade. Ben Ballin is a Primary Champion, Consultant to the GA and a member of the Primary Geography Editorial Board.

LANDSCAPES AND BED SHEETS

JON CANNELL

Here, Jon shares an activity that explores human and physical landscape processes, which was inspired by a workshop at the 2017 Geographical Association Annual Conference.

This year's GA Annual Conference hosted a fabulously eclectic assortment of workshops, lectures and networking opportunities, abundant in teaching titbits and treasures: each one shining and sparkling in the Surrey sunshine. Primary teachers habitually model and support pupils with their learning by coaching them to share and adapt or 'magpie' ideas, while simultaneously bestowing a sense of academic honesty. It was no wonder then that throughout the two days teachers could be observed swooping back and forth, wide-eyed and frenzied like magpies in a jeweller's shop unable to resist a bit of bling!

One such jewel was delivered during the truly inspiring 'Geo-gnome' session, run by Sharon Witt and Helen Clarke, where reference was made to the use of a bed sheet as part of a scientific study of a landscape (Kibble, 2008). You can read more about the Geo-gnomes in the Spring 2018 issue of *Primary Geography*!

Thinking geographically, I immediately began to wonder how many human and physical processes could be explored using a bed sheet and a few everyday items found in a primary school, together with another gem 'magpied' from Sharon and Helen: a laminated cardboard finger puppet.

The starting point is simple: divide the class into four groups and give each group a quarter of a king-sized bed sheet. Ask them to spread it over their table, complete with its clutter, to create a three-dimensional landscape. Next, ask them to add items using equipment provided, such as blue/black/yellow wool, lolly sticks, conical water cups, cotton wool, marbles, blue/green/brown felt and unifix cubes/half cubes, to the landscape one at a time, discussing each positioning collaboratively (Figure 1). Pupils can do this in any order, but placing the rivers and natural features on first will help to determine where they can fit the human features in. You could follow the suggestions shown in the Figure 1. Once everything is in place, the groups can adjust the features as the pupils reflect on any connections that become apparent when they look at the bigger picture.

Their 3D landscape is now complete and the groups can now enjoy a wealth of possible themes and activities. Suggestions are as follows.

- Explore the landscape using a compass and a puppet (such as Barnaby Bear). As a route maker, Barnaby can direct his audience through the challenges, sights, sounds and highlights of a journey through the landscape.
- Create a 2D map of the landscape, with key, compass rose and scale bar.
- Proposed development: this could be a theme park, High Speed Rail Link or something controversial (e.g. a quarry, industrial estate or fracking site).
- Develop and write a narrative based on a journey through the landscape.
- Change the underlying physical landscape to one that is flatter, one that is more rugged, or one with a dominant feature (e.g. a lake, canyon or wide river).
- Ask pupils what other features they could add to their landscape. What would they use to represent these?
- Link the 'settlement islands' around the classroom using junk model bridges.
- Write/speak a set of instructions to enable Barnaby Bear to navigate from one point to another.
- Expand on the reasoning for site selection and subsequent growth.
- Where would Barnaby Bear live and why? Where would you live and why? What about an elderly person, a disabled person, a farmer, a teacher…?
- Redesign the landscape by rearranging the 'clutter' under the sheet. How would they redesign the landscape? What would they place on it?
- Where is it likely to be warmer/colder/windier/more sheltered in their landscape? What would this mean in terms of the 'settlement' of people, or the habitats of animals and plants?
- Barnaby is going on a camping trip – where in their landscape should he pitch his tent each night and why? The focus could include weather, flooding, slope angle, access to food and water or other points of general safety.
- Use a dust sheet over a table, bench or climbing frame outside and undertake similar activities, but at a much larger scale.
- Ask pupils to recreate a section of a local OS map using the sheet and whatever can be found around the classroom.
- Pupils pose questions to others in their group, asking, for example:
  - Where would you be most likely to find a… cliff/valley/deep (fertile) soil/beach/hotel/sheep/eagle?
  - Where would you feel most… comfortable/happiest/worried/scared/excited?
  - Where would you most like to… visit/have a picnic/explore with an adult/explore alone/stay the night/fly over as an eagle?

A magpie constantly returns home, carefully integrating into the very fibre of the nest the trinkets and precious artefacts collected on its travels. In the same way it is imperative that, as teachers, we constantly return 'home' to the National Curriculum; thereby ensuring that the precious activities and ideas that we have collected are maintaining the necessary coverage and progression in geography.

In a broad sense the open-ended, creative and hands-on activities above are aimed at meeting the defining statements within the primary geography orders, to 'inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives' (DfE, 2013). These words are echoed in the 2017 EYFS framework: 'igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning' (DfE, 2017). On a more exacting level, they aim to meet individual statements as exemplified in Figure 2.

Although this article focuses on EYFS and KS1 it takes only a little imagination to adapt some of the activities for KS2.

The best ideas are often the simplest. Like those outlined here, ideas may start as a single kernel, but quickly and organically sprout in a multitude of directions and manifestations. The GA Annual Conference is a rich source of precious kernels just waiting to pique the curiosity and stimulate the imagination of a whole new audience and fruit widely.

References

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DfE (2013) *The National Curriculum in England: Framework document*. London: DfE.

Kibble, B. (2008) 'Shadows and stone circles: a storyline', *Primary Science*, 103, pp. 33–5.

Rivers

Instruct each group to use the marbles and blue wool to plot the route of three or four rivers across their landscape.

Tip: The marbles will, like water, follow the path of least resistance under the force of gravity.

Railway tracks

When they place the yellow wool railway tracks on, ask the pupils to discuss their experiences. You could also ask specific questions, such as: do trains generally go up hills?

Wind turbines/mills

Groups place their wind powered features (lolly sticks and cone cups) on the landscape.

Discussion tip: focus on localised weather and climate. Traditional windmills needed to be accessible for the transport of corn/flour to the mill.

Settlements

Using the Unifix cubes/half cubes, groups can create an array of villages, towns and cities. Pupils should consider the number of each type of settlement and how to represent the differences on their landscape (e.g. a city could be denoted by a cathedral).

Discussion tip: what infrastructure do settlements need? Was this different in the past?

Roads

Instruct each group to use the black wool to lay down roads across the landscape and to include at least one crossroads.

Discussion tip: what will influence the positioning of the roads (e.g. gradient, rivers, settlement location)? What engineering might be used to help access to some areas of their landscape (e.g. bridges and tunnels)?

Livestock

There is likelihood that the placements of cotton wool livestock or snow would be similar. This opens up the discussion to looking at the links between higher, harsher climatic zones and livestock farming.

Flood plain/lakes/marsh/woodlands

Use pieces of green, brown and blue felt to demonstrate various land uses. This can stimulate a range of discussions on where specific land use is most likely to occur naturally.

Figure 1: Creating the landscape. Photos © Jon Cannell, used with thanks to the staff of Galton Valley Primary School, Birmingham.

Phase	Activity	Curriculum coverage
EYFS	Explore the landscape using Barnaby Bear puppet. Barnaby then directs his audience through the challenges, sights, sounds and highlights of his journey.	**Understanding the world** Pupils know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes. **Personal, social and emotional development** Making relationships: pupils play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children. **Expressive arts and design** Being imaginative: They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, role-play and stories.
KS1	Creating and discussing the 3D map and the features it holds.	**Human and physical geography** Use basic geographical vocabulary to refer to: • key physical features, including: beach, cliff, coast, forest, hill, mountain, sea, ocean, river, soil, valley, vegetation, season and weather • key human features, including: city, town, village, factory, farm, house, office, port, harbour and shop **Geographical skills and fieldwork** Use aerial photographs and plan perspectives to recognise landmarks and basic human and physical features; devise a simple map; and use and construct basic symbols in a key

Figure 2: Exemplification of ensuring the activities undertaken maintain the exacting level of National Curriculum coverage and progression. Source: DfE, 2013; 2017.

WEB RESOURCES

Book for the 2018 GA Conference:
www.geography.org.uk/conference

Jon Cannell is Primary Curriculum Leader at the Geographical Association.

HOW DO MAPS AND GLOBES REPRESENT OUR WORLD?

KATIE CHANNER, HANNAH LYNCH, NICOLA MAYOR AND FLORENCE PETT WITH EMILY ROTCHELL

Having not all had the chance to teach geography before, and just a week before their final block placement, Primary PGCE students Katie, Hannah, Nicola and Florence undertook a lesson aimed at helping pupils to understand that flat maps and spherical globes represent the world in different ways. Here, with their Geography Senior Lecturer, Emily, the student teachers offer thoughts and ideas on this lesson.

During our elected Masters-level option in geography, we were confronted with the opportunity and rather daunting challenge to teach a lesson on maps and how they represent the world to a year 3 class. How could we convey the size, scale and dimensions of this huge and beautiful planet when pupils' experience of the world covers such a tiny area? Often, the traditional approach is through the three-part lesson plan – with a starter, main activity/activities and plenary. In our opinion, the majority of the activities would need to be very detailed in order for the lesson to run smoothly, as parts of the geography lesson we were due to teach would be more challenging. A major consideration was that we had never met the class before and we had to be more flexible in our planning approach, so we began investigating alternative approaches.

The main learning objective for this lesson was for pupils to understand that Earth is spherical. Often teachers are encouraged to share learning objectives with the class before the lesson so that pupils can reflect on this at the end of the lesson. However, this learning was going to be different! We wanted pupils to become investigators, carrying out a process of enquiry. We did not want to give them an answer up-front, we wanted the pupils to find the answers out for themselves, and, possibly, overcome potential difficulties on the way.

Before we planned the lesson we considered different approaches and activities, aiming to find those that would be the most successful in achieving the learning objective for the pupils. As well as exploring the book, *Little Blue Planet: Investigating Spaceship Earth* by Paula Owens (2011), we trialled a practical activity, which involved peeling an orange and trying to flatten it out into a 2D map. This proved quite difficult for us adults to do, let alone pupils! We thought that this could have been included as a lovely demonstration, but eventually we rejected the idea. Perhaps the pupils could begin to understand the difficulties faced by early cartographers?

To recap on their previous learning about maps and globes, we began the lesson by getting the pupils to think about what '2D' and '3D' actually mean. Pupils were asked to find examples of two- and three-dimensional shapes around the classroom, including a 2D map and a 3D globe. Next, we asked pupils to spot differences and similarities between a world map and a globe. Here, they made several observations:

- 'maps are flat, globes are round'
- 'there is more detail on a globe'
- 'there are "bumpy bits" on a globe'
- 'the globe has lots of different shades of colour'.

Following this, we considered pupils' own experiences by encouraging them to identify places on the globe, for example, that they had lived in, or had a relative from.

The 'main part' of the lesson was to follow. After careful consideration, we took a creative approach that was similar to Martin's (2006), who informs us that to be creative you need to:

- play with ideas
- look at the known differently
- question the accepted
- create meanings and own them for ourselves
- be aware of, and open to, possibilities and perspectives.

In terms of playing with ideas, groups of pupils were given a selection of 2D world maps and nets on their tables (Figure 1) and a globe. We asked for a show of hands if the pupils thought they could make one of the 2D maps or nets into a 3D globe. The vast majority were confident they could achieve this. We asked them to try it out, and supplied additional resources such as glue, scissors, split pins, blu-tack and sticky tape. As you can imagine, the activity was rather a challenge (after all, it is almost impossible)! In terms of differentiation, pupils were given a choice of which maps they would like to try to turn into globes, with the most challenging option chosen by over half the pupils (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Most pupils were confident they could make a globe from one of the maps and nets on offer. Photo © Emily Rotchell.

Figure 2: The pupils chose which map they would like to try and turn into a globe. Photo © Emily Rotchell.

Figure 3: Despite some success, pupils were also able to critically analyse their resulting 'globes'. Photo © Emily Rotchell.

All of the pupils were fully engaged and there was a lot of discussion during the task. The class teacher commented that the talk was all task related and, hence, it was purposeful. Essentially, the pupils were questioning what they had already accepted: can a 2D map be made into an accurate globe (which they thought they could do), or, perhaps more importantly, can a 3D object be truly represented in two dimensions?

One girl almost succeeded in her attempt to create a 3D globe from a given net (see Figure 3), but after close questioning, she quickly noticed there were gaps in her 'globe', which did not appear on the 'real' globe on her table.

We were concerned that pupils might be disappointed they were unable to achieve the given task. Were we setting them up to fail? However, the pupils had become investigators and, by the end of the lesson, nearly all of the pupils had realised that they were unable to make a 2D shape into a 3D globe. The two or three pupils who still felt it was possible were asked to investigate further by trying out their own nets and doing their own research as a homework task.

In the plenary, our aim was to demonstrate to pupils that their findings were correct. Using an 'expert' via a YouTube video clip, *Why all World Maps are Wrong* (see web panel). This video demonstrates the cutting open of a globe and trying to 'flatten it out'. In other words, the inverse to what pupils tried in the classroom. As they see from the video this cannot work – by stretching out the globe into a map some countries become distorted.

As follow-up pupils could:

- focus on local maps and their uses, or the land uses that are indicated on the globes by different colours/texture (which came up as a difference between maps and globes during the lesson)
- look at a map in more depth and detail to analyse oceans, continents, etc.
- create their own maps for a specific journey (e.g. from school to the local high street)
- use co-ordinates to plot landmarks on a self-made map
- explore map keys, finding out what the different symbols mean.

On reflection

With time permitting, in relation to the variety of similarities and differences between globes and maps, it may have been better to think about this in sequence: first, the differences between different types of 2D maps, second, the differences between different types of 3D globes, and third, the differences between maps and globes. The other change we would make, was (as suggested by the class teacher) to use Google Earth as a resource when asking pupils to draw on their own/their relatives' experiences of places in the world.

Overall, these year 3 pupils rose to the challenge, successfully taking on the role of 2D/3D investigators. After what was for us a daunting start, we were very pleased with the way in which they became immersed in the task and recognised its complexities. Perhaps, most importantly, we feel more confident about teaching geography in schools in future.

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Owens, P. (2011) *Little Blue Planet: Investigating Spaceship Earth.* Sheffield: Geographical Association.

WEB RESOURCES

YouTube map demonstration (first 44 seconds of the video only): *www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIID5FDi2JQ*

At the time of writing Katie Channer, Hannah Lynch, Nicola Mayor and Florence Pett were all undertaking the Primary Geography Elective as part of their PGCE course at Roehampton University. Emily Rotchell is a Senior Lecturer in Primary Geography at Roehampton University.

TROUT, SILVER STREAMS AND WATERFALLS

GORDON MACLELLAN

Gordon explains how, as artists, he and his colleague, Steve Brown, worked creatively with schools that were participating in a biodiversity project hatching trout for release into local rivers.

River source

*'There is a silver stream, so cool and fresh as can be...'**

We did not have sparkling mountain spring water, running fast and shallow over the beds where eggs lay, golden pearls between the stones, but we did have fish tanks with chilled and filtered water in schools across East Lancashire. One hundred Brown Trout eggs sifted down into the gravel of each tank and, across the Ribble River catchment, pupils watched their progress anxiously and eagerly.

Over the last few years, various projects have improved water quality and widened biodiversity in the Ribble catchment. Since 2014, as part of a community engagement strategy, the Ribble Rivers Trust (see web panel) has been hatching trout in local schools before asking the pupils to release the fry as fingerlings into rivers within walking distance of each school (including rural as well as urban areas like Burnley). Within this context, my colleague, Steve Brown, and I worked with participating schools to explore the hatching process and its impacts creatively. More on our work can be traced in The Hatching postings on my Creeping Toad blog (see web panel).

With the creative work, we set out to use music, poetry and visual art to:

- provide an opportunity to integrate The Hatching work with wider learning
- use The Hatching process as a focus for river work generally, looking at river geography, water purity and pollution issues
- promote close observation and understanding of the fish and their ecology
- offer teachers hands-on experience of activities they might take up for themselves on other occasions
- offer pupils creative opportunities where (as individuals, small groups and whole classes) they can consider their own feelings about, and reactions to, the hatching process while incorporating their emotional responses with river knowledge.

Feelings ran high. In all our schools, we were hugely impressed by just how involved pupils (mostly year 6 classes, but sometimes younger) became in the growth and survival of their young charges. There were triumphs and disasters. If filters failed, refrigeration units switched off, or lights left on for too long, casualties ensued and we were writing epitaphs to fish. Lessons were learned, techniques improved and, in the second year, fry survival rates increased.

And us? Steve and I bounced in with instruments and card, microphones, oil pastels and images, our heads full of rivers and hearts full of fish.

Singing rivers

'Rain pours down to wash the sky...'

With the pupils, we composed songs and soundscapes. Charting rivers as rhythms and pace, pupils created patterns of water movement. Splashing around for an opening line, with Steve, groups would start to build songs. Steve is adept at finding a rhythm that suits that opening line and encouraging a group to decide: Blues? Rock? A rousing Trout Anthem? A tragic folk ballad?

'A pike is on the loose, I'd better swim away,

Hiding under pebbles, that's where I'll lay'
(Heasandford Primary, 2015)

With all our sessions, time was always pressing, so half the class would work with Steve: talking, sharing, arguing rhymes and swapping dilemmas. The other half would be with me, reciting rivers and creating trout. An hour each, before an exchange: the song would be handed over, the river poems see a shift-change of bailiffs. For us, it was a great exercise in distilling activities down to an essential set of fish bones.

For us, this was not teaching about rivers. The classes were exploring river knowledge in their formal lessons: our role was to help pupils integrate that knowledge, experiment with it and apply it creatively, really helping the learning to bed down in pupils' understanding. We came into this as artists, but our role was to make this sort of creativity accessible to pupils and to offer teachers new ideas that they could incorporate into other geography themes. To this end, our activities generally used readily-available materials and often involved encouraging pupils to look at a subject from a slightly different angle: seeing rivers as stories and songs, and river processes as voices to listen to, resulted in long rhythmic poems. I have carried out similar projects with other topics, especially geology. There we have told of the long slow lives of mountains through dance and created puppets that embodied the qualities and attributes of different rocks.

Between visits to schools, Steve and I edited songs and my blog sprouted 'The Hatching' posts. This included links to songs to allow classes to visit their own work (they all got copies of the songs directly too) and see and hear what other schools were doing. We wrote up activities as worksheets to provide a resource pack for future school sessions. (Hopefully, not depriving ourselves of future work at the same time!) The worksheet pack can be downloaded (see web panel). While these activities are focused on rivers, any teacher could give them a shake and use them in other subjects.

Speaking rivers

'Trout blend in brown as sand, as stone, as shadows...'

With river pictures as starting points in my sessions, we 'built' rivers across tables with pupils shuffling a series of images to decide on the course of their own ideas. Positions of rapids and meanders, floodplains, estuaries, fast and slow waters were all decided by the groups. Drawing the feel of chosen stretches of water gave us patterns, movements and then words to work with. We played with the river in words, discarding rhyme for rhythm, assonance for alliteration, revelling in the cascades and ripples of rapids and waterfalls, the stillness of deep pools. Speaking and editing went together and presentation offered more opportunities for improvisation until the pupils had rivers

that rippled as pictures and spoken words across classroom floors.

'Slowing down, running wider,

The river slips into a pool,

Dark, ice-cold water

Deep water, calm water, ripples meandering,

Slow carp in deep pools'
(Stoneyholme Primary School, 2015).

'Waterfall drags the river,

Over the edge,

And drops it,

Rushing,

Racing,

Rapid,

Dashing,

Smashing,

Crashing'
(Holy Trinity Primary School, 2015).

Folded rivers

A more personal option had pupils building individual pop-up river landscapes, creating moments in the lives of our fish (Figure 1). Using quick card-sculpture techniques ('chairs' and 'benches' were instantly adopted as technical jargon), pupils used their own aquatic knowledge to build 'golden eggs in a gravel red' or 'While little fish swim in weeds and shadows, Safe from otters and pupils with nets', or the glory of a leaping trout. The pupils found pop-ups easy to create and they are a readily transferable skill.

The pupils produced pieces of work that stood as individual creations and (with a bit of co-operation) could be lined up to unfold as a whole set of river scenes. In one memorable and spectacular extra session, three classes worked together to create a pop-up river with each folded section being about one metre long: the finished work ran for 30 metres along the school hall.

Rivers on heads

In celebratory carnival mode some groups built rivers on hands and heads with fingers full of tiny puppets: fry, frogs, crayfish and mayfly nymphs (pupils grew suddenly exacting and technical in deciding just what invertebrates they were going to wriggle). Crowns on pupils' heads held bigger trout, great crested grebes and the occasional swan. (Side-tracking into sharks, dolphins and crocodiles we tried (not always successfully) to discourage.)

Ceremonial rivers

Most of our sessions were indoors, but as release of the fingerlings approached in 2015, second visits to our Hatching schools provided pupils with opportunities to polish songs and write farewell poems. The 'Release' became much more of a celebration with Troutsingers to sing the fry on their way and a Troutspeaker to recite our poem – words of advice to a fingerling trout.

'Inhale the future, exhale the past...'

Overall, the Hatching was a great success. Fry-raising techniques improved a lot over the two years and the integration of the project into wider schoolwork increased as teachers became more familiar with the opportunities and excitement that the aquaria offered. And us? The half-day art workshops did not contribute a whole lot of time to each school, but in talking to pupils and teachers it was clear that our visits had a great impact. Songs were remembered weeks and months later, pop-ups were displayed, poems recited and the creative techniques used again and again.

'Think I'm gonna cry now, teardrops

Run like rapids down my face

Reflecting on the river, all these

Memories will not float away'
[closing lines of the song of a trout released into the river]
(Ightenhill Primary School, 2015).

* All quotes throughout are from school poems and songs.

WEB RESOURCES

Rivers worksheet pack: *http://ures-burnley.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Creative-worksheet-pack-for-RIC-Final-version-May-2015.pdf*
Creeping Toad blog: *http://creepingtoad.blogspot.co.uk*
Ribble Rivers Trust: *http://ribbletrust.org.uk/*

Gordon MacLellan trained in terrestrial ecology and teaching, and now works (with Steve Brown) as a storyteller and artist, Creeping Toad. His work revolves around finding creative ways to help people explore the relationships between people, places and wildlife.

Figure 1: The pupils built individual pop-up river landscapes, creating moments in the lives of our fish. An easy-to-learn and transferable skill, the pop-up pieces of work stood as individual creations and could be lined up to unfold as a whole set of river scenes. Photo © Gordon MacLellan.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

ALICE MOBLEY

In 2015, Alice took the huge decision to move to Dubai. Here she reports on her experiences of moving to teach overseas.

Making the move

During 2015, I entered my fourth year of teaching. I had been through my first Ofsted inspection, worked hard adapting to the new National Curriculum and dealt with the many other challenges we teachers face on a daily basis. I realised I had made a footprint on the school and the pupils within it, but it was time for a change. I was ready for a new challenge. Teaching abroad had always intrigued me and my curiosity was piqued during that year.

Being an only child, and close to my parents, did not make leaving the UK any easier. Mum and Dad were very supportive and understood my reasons for wanting to teach in a completely different culture, yet I knew (deep down) they wanted me to stay. However, I made the decision, and chose to teach in Dubai.

Background

Dubai was first mentioned by Abu Abdullah al-Bakri (an Andalucian-Arab geographer) in his *Book of Geography*, in 1095. The capital of the Emirate of Dubai (one of seven Emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates), Dubai itself is a thoroughly modern city with Islam at its heart. The city is expanding daily, and, as a result, so are the schools!

Settling in

At the time of writing, it is now almost a year since I moved to Dubai. Every day brings new adventures and different emotional responses – some expected, some not. By teaching in Dubai, you are guaranteed to meet people who become your 'family' and, as you make Dubai your second home, you cement these friendships for life. People from all over the world choose to 'settle' in Dubai. I am just one of the increasing number of teachers from the UK who become 'expatriates' in this inspiring city. (The educated and experienced who leave their home countries to find more money, more experience and a new aspect to life have become known as the 'brain-drain'.) I found it vital to get involved in as many social activities in the first few months of moving here, and the schools help by running induction weeks in the August preceding the school year.

School life

The majority of primary and secondary schools in Dubai are private. They can choose what curriculum they want to follow, which suits what is, after all, a multi-cultural society. The English curriculum (referred to here as 'the British Curriculum') is very highly regarded.

I work at Victory Heights Primary School (an International School in Sports City, Dubai); although it is 7000km away from England, the school has a very British ethos. The pupils thrive, and enjoy coming to school every day. Knowing this kind of school exists in the UAE, I now feel that, when I do return to the UK (as I intend to), I will have been able to keep up with changes to assessments and standards. I must admit, this was one of my concerns about moving to teach in a different continent.

My day-to-day routine is slightly different from that in the UK. In Dubai, schools have specialist teachers for art, music, ICT, PE, Islamic and Arabic (all pupils learn Arabic from Foundation stage), which means I often get daily time slots out of the classroom. There is a dedicated focus on the core subjects plus the 'Creative Curriculum' and 'Social Studies'. These areas encompass history and geography and both subjects focus on the UAE, because the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (which inspects schools in Dubai) requires pupils to have a rich wealth of knowledge about the United Arab Emirates. The photos here show some of the pupils' work from year 1. By the end of year 1, they should be able to locate the seven Emirates on a map and name each Emirate. In addition, these pupils should be able to explain who the Bedouin people are and discuss their influence on the UAE. Finally, pupils should have a sound understanding of the famous landmarks in Dubai and be able to discuss each one detail.

The pupils in year 1 are required to have a rich wealth of knowledge about the UAE. Photos © Alice Mobley.

Many pupils, whose families have immigrated to Dubai, have a very strong link to their home country. Many will have travelled to other countries with their families so my pupils have been exposed to different environments, climates and cultures from a young age. This makes teaching geography very engaging for the pupils and often creates a lot of discussion. Pupils who are just five or six are able to compare living in different places. In my class alone there are pupils of more than ten different nationalities. As with some multi-cultural schools in the UK, international schools in the UAE can contain as many as 20 nationalities in one class. Ultimately, these pupils are able to learn more about the wider world from each other than from me! Immigration, which is a necessity to the UAE way of life, is actively encouraged and this cultural diversity provides wonderful opportunities for teaching and learning about world geography.

It is clear that the people of the UAE are patriotic about their country: they display flags on houses, in shopping malls and around schools. The National Anthem is played at the start of each school day and all the pupils stand to sing it. We hold whole-day celebrations for National Day (2 December) and International Day of Happiness (20 March). Pupils are encouraged to become involved – they spend the whole day focusing on these special celebrations. I personally feel that pupils are given many opportunities to work collaboratively as well as challenges in which team work is essential to succeed in the tasks.

Initially, I struggled to come to terms with the hierarchy of cultural groups in Dubai. The facts state that 16.5% of Dubai's population is Emirati – meaning the remainder (a huge 83.5%) are expatriates! Moreover, each of the seven Emirates is slightly different: they are governed in different ways and choose some local laws to follow (e.g. alcohol is illegal in Sharjah, but legal in Abu Dhabi and Dubai). However, because the Emirati population is so small they are highly valued and very well looked after financially. Other cultures are often treated very differently, and (unlike in the UK), equality is not observed. I do wonder how this will affect future generations living in the UAE, especially as more people settle here on a more permanent basis.

Reaping the benefits

The lifestyle you can lead as a teacher in Dubai is like no other. Teachers with an international contract are provided with living accommodation or an equivalent accommodation allowance, your salary is tax-free, which results in a much higher 'take-home' pay than in the UK, and the school will cover most of your medical costs. The extra spending power means that if you want to travel the world, or save for the future, or go out and enjoy all that Dubai has to offer as a city, you can. There are a lot of interesting places near Dubai that encompass holiday destinations as well as spiritual, cultural and environmental tourist enclaves.

It is safe to say, since I moved to Dubai, my life and lifestyle have been transformed. Although I miss my family and friends every day, living here has been an opportunity that I will never forget.

Alice Mobley taught in an inner-city school in Birmingham for 3.5 years before moving to teach in Dubai.

A WOODLAND 'WHAT IF…?'

RICHARD GREENWOOD

In this article, Richard explains how, after student teachers explored the College campus with local pupils, he used a hypothetical scenario to challenge pupils' thinking about land-use change on the campus.

Autumn to winter

How do you think your pupils would react to a proposal to cover some beautiful local woodland with houses? Shock perhaps; horror, even? It would be a strong response. First year teacher education students (hereafter student teachers) at Stranmillis University College in Belfast, Northern Ireland, invited 8–9-year-old pupils from nearby Stranmillis Primary School to the College's campus. The aim was to challenge the pupils' reactions to just such a proposal.

In October the College grounds always look their golden best. On their first walk round the grounds with the student teachers, the pupils enjoyed collecting autumn leaves and fruit. Working in groups, they talked about ways of describing the autumn colours, took photos and enjoyed the scent of fresh air (Figure 1 and 2). They explored somewhere beautiful and local, but also rather mysterious because the College grounds are usually inaccessible to the pupils. We introduced a range of factual and affective activities (e.g. close-up and wide-view observation and being quiet and just listening). Back in the classroom the next week the student teachers worked with the pupils writing autumn-themed poems and creating collages using the leaves and fruit the pupils had collected.

On a second walk in winter, each group of student teachers and pupils retraced their steps. They compared images (as prints or on iPads) taken on the autumn walk with what they could see: the trees, which had been covered in gold, yellow and red leaves, were now stark and bare. This time the pupils were tasked with making homes for elves or fairies using fallen leaves, moss and twigs (Witt, 2017). Follow-up work involved the pupils sketching the winter trees and creating poems that described autumn turning to winter.

Figure 1: On their first walk round the grounds with the student teachers, the pupils enjoyed collecting autumn leaves and fruit. Photo © Richard Greenwood.

Figure 2: The pupils enjoyed exploring somewhere beautiful and local, but also rather mysterious because the grounds are usually inaccessible to the pupils. Photo © Richard Greenwood.

Teacher, pupil and student teacher responses

The two class teachers were very positive about the benefits of the College link-up. There were lots of extra pairs of adult hands and eyes, the pupils had a chance to explore an unfamiliar part of the local area and there were lots of creative ideas for follow-up work in class – and all at no extra cost! All of the pupils enjoyed the experience thoroughly; especially being allowed to run around, ask questions and use their imagination. The student teachers gained a lot from their experience: in a module essay on the experience, one student teacher encapsulated the general consensus:

'A pupil told me after her outdoor learning experience that "instead of just seeing pictures of things, you can actually touch and feel them". It was then that I realised that outdoor learning made learning real for the pupils. It was, as another pupil told me, "much more fun than doing times tables in the classroom!"'

'What if…'

I decided to extend the pupils' learning outside the classroom (LOtC) experience by going into the school to teach a lesson to one of the classes. My idea was to get the pupils to carry out a hypothetical thinking skills exercise.

First, I asked the pupils to recall their autumn and winter walks, showing them images I had taken during their visits to the College campus. We discussed what they remembered and what they enjoyed most. The consensus was that making elf or fairy homes was the most fun, but some pupils said how much they had enjoyed simply being outside, looking at the leaves, picking up autumn fruit and watching out for squirrels.

I then posed the scenario:

*'**What if…** you heard on the radio or saw on television news that the Stranmillis College campus had been sold to a property developer – a builder – and the whole area was going to have houses built on it. That means that all of the big College buildings would be knocked down and the trees and bushes all cleared away so that around 120 new houses with roads and gardens could be built. How would you feel if you heard that?'*

I gave the pupils a few minutes of 'think-pair-share' time and then listened to their comments. Understandably, most of them were worried about the trees, bushes, squirrels, badgers and birds, especially the many magpies that we saw on our walks. Some pupils were concerned about the College students (and staff!) who worked there, asking: 'What will happen to them?'

Pros and cons

I introduced a four-way grid (or Carroll diagram); this has empty boxes in which pupils can record the pros and cons of keeping the campus as it is or building houses on the site (Figure 3). The top left box – the pros of keeping the campus – we completed as a whole class because it involved recording opinions, which had already been aired by the pupils. I asked pairs of pupils to write comments and opinions in the other three boxes as bullet point lists (Figure 4). The more able pupils quickly worked out that the pros of one option are effectively the cons of the other. So the diagonally opposite boxes have similar arguments, but are expressed in opposite language. Some pupils struggled to think of anything to write in favour of the house building option.

One girl became particularly frustrated, saying, 'I can't think of any reason why anyone would want to build houses and chop down all of those lovely trees!'

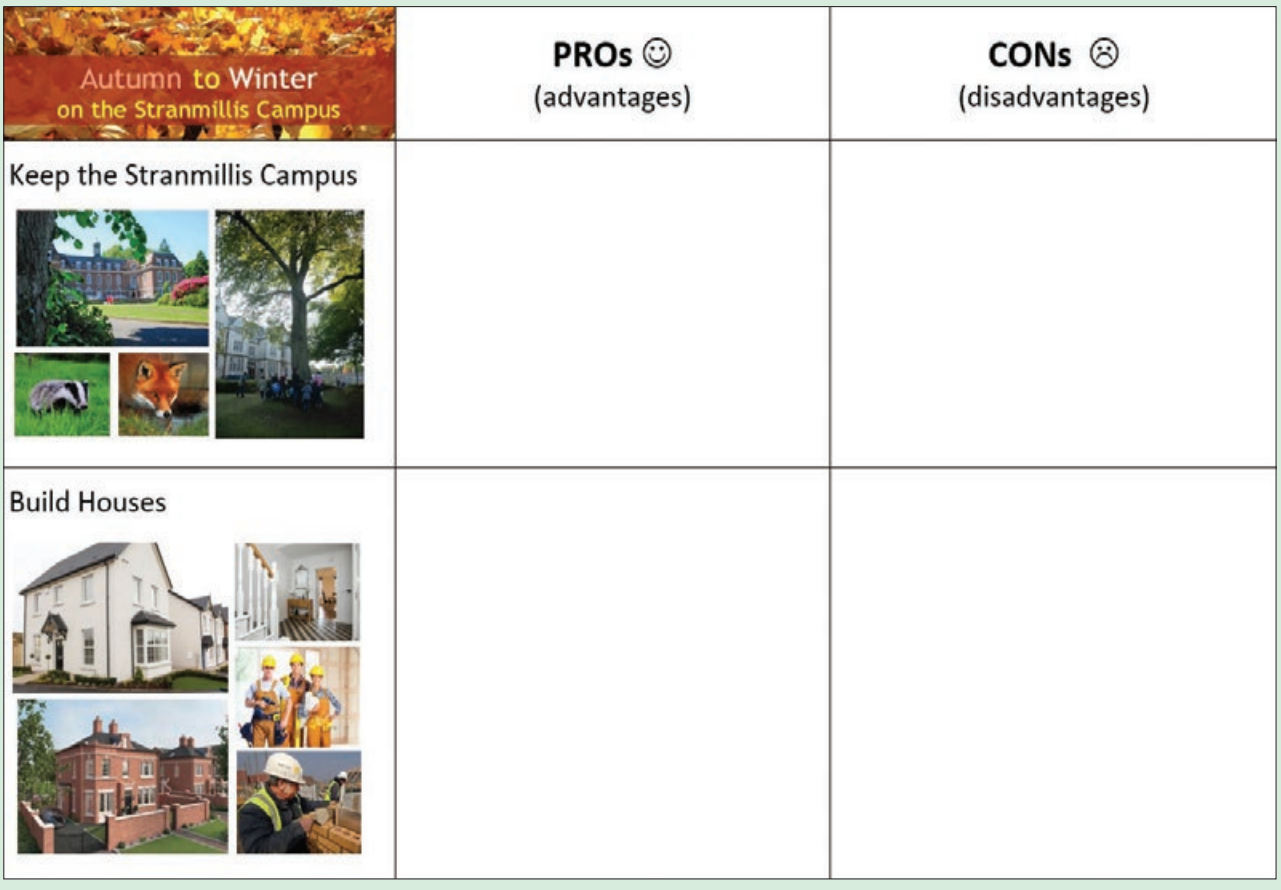

Figure 3: We used a Carroll diagram – a four-way grid – for recording the pros and cons. Photo © Richard Greenwood.

I asked her where she lived and she explained that her house was about a kilometre from the school, in a small estate off the main road. 'I know the area well', I said. 'When I was your age, I lived near the detached houses where you live. Then it was just fields with some trees – a place where I played!' She was rather shocked when I added: 'Nothing stays the same forever!' People have always had to make decisions involving uncomfortable change in their local area.

Having monitored the activity, I convened a discussion about the arguments the pairs had recorded. I displayed their ideas on the interactive whiteboard. Some pupils had realised that arguments for building houses centres on jobs for builders and homes for people to live in. When I talked about the fact that building houses would be good for the 'bank account' of Northern Ireland as a whole, one boy impressed me by using the 'e' word – 'economy' in the right context!

Figure 4: Pairs of pupils wrote comments and opinions in the other three boxes as bullet point lists. Photo © Richard Greenwood.

'You can't please all of the people…'

Once we had all the arguments up on the screen, we discussed other changes in land use. These included opening a quarry, building a dam or flood defences, creating a 'superdump', or installing wind turbines; and are usually changes that some people want but others do not. Those opposing the change protest against it, may end up in court and get politicians involved. I quoted the famous statement by the monk and poet John Lydgate (*c.* 1370–1451) from Bury St Edmunds:

> *'You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time.'*

The pupils had fun trying to repeat Lydgate's phrase back to me! Finally, I set a challenge for the pupils: 'If you wanted to explain to your parents (or another adult) what you had been working on today – how would you do it?'

Follow-up work

The pupils worked on the campus/houses issue with their class teacher the following week, so I returned to see the work they had done. I had explained they could do one of the following as a group activity:

- create a montage either supporting the retention of the campus as it is or clearing it to build houses on (they could include drawings of animals, a house design or an estate layout)
- produce a short piece of prose explaining why the campus should remain or why the houses should be built
- write a poem expressing their feelings about the change of land use of the campus or people's need for new homes
- create a poster calling for the campus to be 'saved' or one demanding new homes be built.

I was very impressed by the work that the pupils had produced. All of the groups bar one had created montages of work in support of the campus being left as it is with lovely drawings of trees, foxes and badgers; some had written short, descriptive poems; and others had written longer pieces of persuasive writing calling for the campus to be 'saved'. Many were eloquent and heartfelt.

Just one group had decided to be different. Their montage was called 'We Need More Houses'; they wrote persuasively about the need for new homes, for the jobs created and that the area would end up looking great. I praised their 'alternative viewpoint' and asked the group to explain why they had chosen to make these arguments when all of the others had gone down the 'save the animals and trees' route. One boy said: 'I knew everyone else would make the other point and I just wanted to be different!', and his two friends agreed. A girl in the group simply stated: 'I like drawing houses!'

Finding a balance

It is important for us to expose young pupils to some of the world's complexities. They may not understand all of the detail and viewpoints, but they can begin to do so. Geography is a wonderful vehicle for the kind of activities that involve 'Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making', 'Being Creative' and 'Working with Others', which are three of Northern Ireland's thinking skills categories. The challenge for teachers is to find ways to encourage pupils' thinking and one of the best ways to do this is to use real, local examples. Ideally, these should involve places that the pupils have experienced first-hand and have some kind of 'attachment' to (Cree, 2006).

A potential danger for teachers in discussing environmental issues is their use of emotive, 'biased' language – perhaps conveying too strongly their own opinions. During the 'What if…?' lesson I tried, for example, to avoid using the word 'destruction', instead I talked about 'change'. Avoiding bias enables pupils to make up their own minds and express their own opinions. Even eight- and nine-year-olds can distinguish between fact and opinion and begin to see that in every important issue there may be many conflicting arguments, concerns and interests; that there are frequently no 'right answers'; and that very often 'You can't please all of the people all of the time'.

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THE PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY INTERVIEW

TIM MARSHALL

Tim Marshall, broadcaster and author of *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps that Tell You Everything You Need to Know about Global Politics* and *Worth Dying For: The Power and Politics of Flags*, gives his thoughts on geography in his life.

How important do you think geography is today?

It's as important as it ever was, which is to say very. The travelling times from A to B may have shortened, but you still factor in distance, terrain and time when making decisions. There are so many reasons to study geography, not least climate change – if the ice caps are melting in the Arctic, I want to know about the impact on countries both in the Arctic and far away, but most of all, I want to learn more about how to stop it melting.

Do you think, with our rapidly changing world, that it is more important to teach geography to primary aged children than ever?

We need to teach geography to young children in order to catch them at the age when their sense of wonder at the world is still fresh. This can inspire them to know more and even lead to a lifelong love of the subject. Also, with the movements of peoples, globalization, and climate change children cannot grow up to understand the rapidity of change, and its effects, without being taught the subject.

What does geography mean to you?

I think of maps, then of mountains, rivers, borders and seas. For me it is very much tied up with travel and place. I also associate it with capital cities. I know that's not classic 'geography' but these were the things that caught my attention as a child. Geography is something that helps make sense of the world.

Tim Marshall.

Which of the countries that you have visited will always have a lasting memory for you?

I'm lucky enough to have visited about 60 countries and so have many memories. Highlights would include first seeing the mountains and plains of Afghanistan, the Sahara Desert, the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. There are other memorable, if less beautiful, memories – I'll certainly never forget the great Serbian retreat out of Kosovo in 1999. There were tens of thousands of people, in thousands of cars, lorries, and even horse-drawn carts all heading north towards Serbia.

What was your most memorable experience of school geography?

Sadly my memory of geography at school is of being thoroughly bored. It seemed to be endless analyses of soil samples about which I understood nothing. What I wanted to do was learn about how many people lived in a certain country, and what its capital was, who its neighbours were, etc. It may well have been because I wasn't paying attention, but I was never energized by the subject at school and I left aged 16 without even taking an exam in geography.

What geography topics would you like to see tackled in primary schools?

I'd like to see an approach that gave context, something where a child can be shown that country 'A' has few trees, and therefore, in previous times, never had a navy, which in turn is one of the reasons why it is not a strong naval power now. Or, on a country study, show the different linguistic groupings, and explain the geographic element of why people speak one language in a part of the country and another language elsewhere. I'm a fan of fact-based learning mixed with enchanting ideas. Without the basics, there's no framework upon which to hang the idea.

If you had one piece of advice to offer to pupils today, what would it be?

That the world is an amazing place; go out and explore it – and look! There's some stuff you might see! This stuff's useful.

Tim Marshall has reported from 30 countries, including on the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Israel, and covered three US Presidential elections. He has been a broadcaster for 30 years and edits the world affairs blog www.thewhatandthewhy.com.

TO CHALLENGE OR NOT? LEV VYGOTSKY AND PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY

SUSAN PIKE

In this article, Susan explores the ideas of educational psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), and his influence on today's geography classrooms.

Born in Russia in 1896, Lev Vygotsky came to educational psychology after a career as a literature teacher. Today his work remains very influential in education. Vygotsky died of tuberculosis at the age of 38, so there is much we do not know about how his theories may have developed. Despite this, many of Vygotsky's publications are still being translated from the Russian, thus enabling us to apply his ideas to our geography lessons today.

Vygotsky's key ideas revolved around learning as part of pupils' development and so should lead, not follow, development. Indeed, he stated 'learning is development' (1978, p. 80). Vygotsky believed teachers should challenge pupils rather than simply responding to how pupils worked. He wrote extensively about the role of teachers and classrooms in developing pupils' thinking and language across school subjects.

Vygotsky's key ideas about teachers and classrooms

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning in children occurs through social interaction with others. He discusses the role of the 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO), who he viewed as a 'skilful tutor' that would challenge pupils. Vygotsky acknowledged that the MKO were generally teachers, but pointed out they could also be peers or other adults – although his work came before the presence of other adults became common in primary classrooms. The role of the MKO was to challenge a pupil beyond their current development through a 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Figure 1). To Vygotsky, guiding a pupil through their ZPD related to: 'the distance between actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers' (1978, p. 86).

He argued these types of activity should not simply involve 'direct teaching', describing such an activity as fruitless: 'a teacher who tries to do this usually: accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, parrot-like repetition of words… covering up a vacuum' (1986, p. 150).

In today's context, teachers provide resources to support pupils' learning, such as thinking-type activities, fiction and non-fiction books, maps or images. Examples of challenging a pupil through their ZPD include:

- Giving pupils, in pairs, two maps of the world – one showing the location of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and the other with the continental plates and their boundaries marked on. As pupils look at the two they should begin to realise, if they do not already know, that the earthquakes and eruptions generally occur at plate boundaries.
- Provide pupils with a printed grid on which to record data on where a butterfly would like to live in the school grounds. They carry out the data recording after a discussion, with images, of what butterflies may need (e.g. shelter, sunshine, stones for basking). Pupils visit different points in the school grounds and think about what butterflies would like or not like. This enables pupils to understand that some aspects of the environment are important for butterflies and encourage them to specific areas. As the pupils do this, they are likely to realise that butterflies and pupils have similar needs of the environment.
- Asking pupils to work together to think about life in a different place (e.g. France) using photographs of a variety of places in that country, rather than photographs of just one place. (Although the pupils could then look at one locality (e.g. Paris) in more detail too.) Both of these ways of looking at 'different' places work well.

These are very much everyday activities in geography lessons; however, without the teacher (or MKO), the resources have little use. It is how the teacher mediates the use of resources through specific activities that is essential to challenging all pupils – supporting some within and stretching others beyond their ZPD.

Thinking and language

Vygotsky argued that educators should use a range of ways to assess and make judgements about pupils' learning. Through his work directly with children, Vygotsky concluded that it was important for us as teachers to observe pupils at play and work

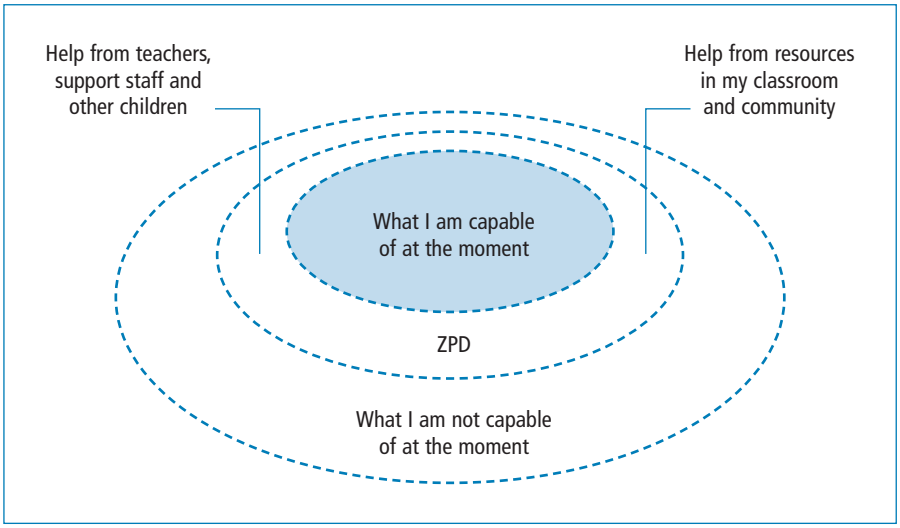

Figure 1: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development.

and to use such observations to plan learning activities. Such thinking runs parallel to ideas around learning through enquiry in geography education (Roberts, 2013; Pike, 2016). Vygotsky also places an emphasis on the role of language in cognitive development. He discusses how cognitive development in children arises from 'an internalization of language, the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development… occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge' (1978, p. 24). Vygotsky also wrote extensively about the importance of children's internal and external speech in enabling children to understand new concepts – an essential aspect of geographical learning (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky referred to this as co-operative or collaborative dialogue (1986): the child seeks to understand the actions or instructions provided by the tutor then internalises the information, using their understanding of it to guide what they do next; i.e. learning is essential to language and learning needs language.

Vygotsky's ideas in today's classrooms

Classrooms have changed somewhat since Vygotsky's time. We now have more resources that we can use to scaffold pupils' learning. Examples of visual and thinking resources are discussed below.

Example 1: Visual resources

We know that using all types of visual material, including video, still images, maps, schematic diagrams, paintings and sculptures, enhances pupils' understanding in geography. This usage is an example of teachers scaffolding pupils to develop through their ZPD. The choices teachers make about the images pupils use can have a huge impact on the pupils' thoughts about distant people and places, and of the more familiar. Using technology, pupils can easily select and manipulate images for themselves.

Example 2: Thinking resources

We know that geographical activities such as mysteries and dilemmas as well as sorting and ranking activities are popular for challenging pupils to think more deeply about an issue. These types of resources were clearly inspired by thinkers such as Vygotsky, and are a perfect example of scaffolding pupils' learning of concepts. The use of such resources can also:

- inspire geographical enquiry questions from pupils
- embed large amounts of information within the cards of writing or images
- help pupils think of ways to categorise information, with or without the support of an adult.

A number of benefits accrue from using these resources, which only become evident as the pupils carry out the activities. First, the weaker readers can access text because it is broken up into short phrases and thus easy to manipulate. Second, they encourage pupils to work together to think and problem solve. Third, they give pupils opportunities to think about and articulate their thinking processes.

Stages of enquiry	Younger classes	Older classes
Generating ideas	Walk in school grounds to generate ideas about trees through **teacher supported** discussions.	Using photographs to talk about the rainforests.
Possible enquiry question	What trees grown in our school? What lives around in and around our trees? How does a habitat work?	Where are the rainforests found? Why are rainforests found there?
Collecting data	Observing trees, tree **activities***, collecting leaves, working out tree types from leaves and or buds **using a key**.	Using a range of **images and video** on rainforests. Looking up the location of tropical biomes in atlases. Marking the location of rainforests on a **world map**. (Pupils may choose a map with **outline of location** on or not.)
Presenting data	Drawing different trees for display. Mapping trees in the school grounds using a **base map**.	Pupils, supported by **teacher input** explain why rainforest are located as they are in the world.
Making sense of data	Pupils verbally describe, with the **support of the teacher**, the patterns they have observed.	Pupils complete a **living graph activity** to relate information about rainforests to their everyday life.
Answering enquiry questions	Pupils **produce a class map** of the trees in the school.	Pupils complete a **diary entry** from the rainforest, supported by **reading other accounts** from a variety of sources.

Figure 2: Examples of resources for scaffolding learning about trees. (*Tree hugging, climbing, investigating, aging trees, naming trees, finding stories in trees, etc.)

Visual and thinking resources are just two of the many ways teachers can scaffold pupils' learning in geography. It is the selection and use of these resources by teachers that enable pupils' learning to flourish.

Vygotsky in lessons: trees and forests

Figure 2 provides examples of the ways we (unwittingly, perhaps) draw on Vygotsky's ideas in geography lessons and in fieldwork. Many actions that come naturally to teachers, such as knowing exactly when to intervene or to let a pupil persevere at a task, are all about working within pupils' ZPD. This includes the resources we use as well as the ways in which we support pupils through working with them. In fact, Figure 2 cannot hope to capture all the ways this could happen – but key questions and examples are shown in bold.

Research shows us that pupils like geography because they learn to do things they did not know or could not do before. It provides us with effective ways to teach geography, such as through enquiry, with challenges and always with fieldwork. Part of the reasons we teach geography like this is because of the many influences of educationalists such as Lev Vygotsky.

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WEB RESOURCES

Examples of locality-based topics, such as the Young Geographer project: *www.geography.org.uk*

Keys and spotting guides for trees: *www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives.*

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FLOODS, DESERTS AND DISPOSABLE NAPPIES

VERITY JONES

Here, Verity argues that geography is the ideal vehicle for embedding real-world literacy, numeracy and science knowledge in preparation for year 6 SATs.

As a year 6 teacher, every minute counts as the deadline for May standard assessment tests (SATs) looms ever closer. Due to this, many of the non-tested areas of the curriculum, including geography, can get shoved from the classroom, leaving pupils bereft of the broader range. However, with science soon to return to SATs, teachers will be required to develop ways of embedding this knowledge – and what better way than through geography? Real life, real action, real consequences and links to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) and Personal and Social Education to boot.

Flooding: a case study

Flooding provides a great way for pupils to explore how nature, people and place collide with each other. Every autumn and winter we are inundated with scenes of mayhem as the news displays images of swollen rivers, flooded fields and houses ruined by rising water levels. I teach in a coastal school in Pembrokeshire in Wales, so flooding provides an exciting route into a way to develop literacy, numeracy, science and geographical understanding.

We started with a discussion about flooding and what it meant to the young people in the class, and after reflection on news items and personal experiences, the pupils organised their ideas formally to consider whether their knowledge was biased or not. Following this the 'Big Idea' to investigate was revealed. In this case, the notion that all soils can absorb the same amount of water. Or, to frame it as an enquiry question, will all soils become saturated at the same point?

Pupils were asked to create an investigative piece of fieldwork to collect data from the local area and undertake soil analysis. This involved mapping the area and agreeing how and where soil samples should be collected from (for example, is it okay to gather soil from under a hedge, or should it be from an open space? will the location affect the amount of water the soil sample already holds?). This task alone provided opportunities for pupils to develop instructional writing and consider the nuances of fair testing in geography and science, as well as using their knowledge about the local area to predict which soils would become supersaturated more quickly. Those wanting further challenge were tasked with designing a range of tests and methodologies.

Back in the classroom, the samples were recorded on the map and then blind tested – each sample having been labelled with just a number. For the purpose of this enquiry, pupils were asked to bring all samples collected on the same day. We did not go to the extent of drying out samples before analysing them, although it was discussed. Pupils worked in small groups to decipher the colour, texture, smell, pH and absorbency of the samples. They measured water, weighed the soils and took various readings.

It was with some relief that the pupils found that the area that would flood more quickly (i.e. the soil became saturated fastest) was a stretch of coastal road at Newgale Beach (Figure 1). The road runs close to a river mouth – an area renowned locally for flooding, with sandy soil on impermeable bedrock. It is also an area that has, over the years, cost the local council millions of pounds to maintain due to flood damage. As a result, there was a discussion as to the future of the road in the media (BBC, 2015). Given this information, four groups of pupils were asked to provide a cost-benefit analysis based on three coastal management proposals.

- Group A considered updating the sea wall and flood defences – this is known as 'advancing the line'
- Group B looked at the implications of keeping the road and residential dwellings as they were ('holding the line')
- Group C worked on the premise of 'managing a retreat' from the area while developing a different route
- Group D looked at totally 'abandoning' the area immediately and developing a different route through the landscape.

Figure 1: The soil that saturated fastest was found to be near Newgale Beach, Pembrokeshire. Photo © Verity Jones.

Each group considered and discussed the risks, costs and benefits of their solution on a range of spatial and temporal scales. We invited Local Authority representatives in to school to chair a 'consultation process' style of discussion. This proved really motivating with even those who are usually reticent to speak out or join in writing about an issue engaging fully with the work. This was challenging geography in action.

Using the knowledge

The work in the classroom provided an engaging context for learning and one that could be replicated in other areas. Yes, we were fortunate to have the ongoing consultation regarding a local floodplain to situate the soil study on, but even without this aspect, the outcomes were exciting. The question then was: where next? I wanted the pupils to focus on a comparative study, so we looked to areas being affected by desertification. Zimbabwe provided an ideal country with its exports to Europe as well as reports of over-farming of areas combined with uncertain rainfall, increasing population and waste management problems.

With regard to the earlier consideration of soils, pupils were to investigate the effectiveness in absorbency and saturation of babies' disposable nappies. These were linked to changes in Zimbabwean culture: reports in Zimbabwe's *Herald* (Nhutsve, 2014) highlighted that there had been a shift away from the use of traditional cloth 'napkins' for babies towards disposable nappies. This was one result of more women going out to work and the convenience of using disposable nappies (Nhutsve, 2014).

As with the soil analysis, pupils were asked to investigate which nappy was able to absorb the most liquid. After the shrieks of disgust had quietened, they became amazed at the sheer quantities of liquid that a disposable nappy can absorb. Their discussion (both oral and written) was developed regarding the pros and cons of using these products and the impact of disposable nappies socially, culturally, economically and environmentally – encompassing the human and physical geographies of place and product becoming woven into the global context (Figure 2).

While this project could have been left there and considered successful in itself, a further line of enquiry remained. The super-absorbent (polyacrylamide) pellets within the disposable nappies had amassed a great deal of pupil interest in the investigative stage (Figure 3). The pupils raised the question: 'was there another use for the pellets?' The answer is yes. These super-absorbent pellets are now being added to soils in areas of the world where there is low rainfall in order to protect the soil from drying out too quickly and damaging crop growth (Hilding, 2014). (In the UK, garden centres use the pellets in hanging baskets for the same reason.) A full circle – from flood to drought – was mapped through this investigation of absorbency and saturation.

Conclusion

This unit of work provided pupils with the opportunity to embed geographical skills and knowledge into real-life contexts, debate real problems and come up with solutions. It merged the physical with the human and had everyone in the class engaged, enthused and enjoying their learning. These young people willingly went deeper into their thinking, their talking and their writing. Their discussion and discovery had a real-life geography-based purpose. Unwittingly, the pupils were developing their literacy, numeracy and science too. If geography is going to hold its own with regard to time dedicated to it in the classroom, then I believe it is through such rich tasks we will see it becoming embedded.

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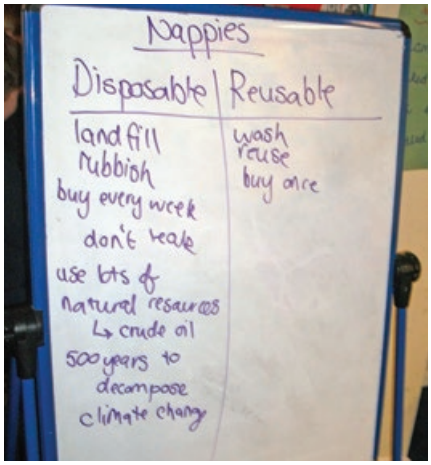

Figure 2: Discussion was developed regarding the pros and cons of disposable nappies. Photo © Verity Jones.

Figure 3: The enquiry led back to soils, as the absorbent pellets used in the nappies are now being added to soils to prevent them from drying out too quickly. Photo © Verity Jones.

PICTURE THIS: DEVELOPING RELATEDNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

RICHARD WOOLLEY

Here, Richard explores the use of picture books to highlight an aspect of geographical understanding that can help pupils to develop self-esteem, empathy or mutual understanding and impact on their relationships and relatedness.

Schools should be safe spaces in which pupils are able to learn, grow and flourish. The space in a primary school can be understood in multi-faceted ways, indeed pupils' time in school: 'is both spatial – in physical space, social space and learning space – and environmental – in the built (constructed) environment, the socio-cultural (interpersonal) environment and the ethos (learning) environment' (Catling, 2005, p. 326).

This article is concerned with the provision of resources in the physical space, in terms of school and classroom libraries and book displays, and the interpersonal and learning environments that impact on relationships and relatedness. Catling identifies this as 'a social, cultural and political space for enacting, deepening and developing the meaning and interplay of people in place' (2005, p. 341). Pupils' personal geographies – the class and community in which they live, and others with whom they have connections – form a significant part of their identity. Valuing such connections is fundamental to supporting pupils' well-being.

Developing resources

Over the past decade, Janice Morris (from Bishop Grosseteste University) and I have published and subsequently expanded and redeveloped the *Family Diversities Reading Resource* (Morris and Woolley, 2007, 2017). Initially, it started out as a collection of high-quality picture books showing the diverse lived experiences of children within families. However, it also contains a selection of books that explore difference in a general sense, and books highlighting children's experiences of family life in diverse settings and locations. It is this final aspect that I am concerned with here, in terms of geographic location and interconnectedness.

Understanding children's spaces

Catling and Martin have argued for the co-construction of learning in geography, suggesting that children are to be viewed as: 'contributors to our shared knowledge and understanding of the world, rather than as recipients and "beneficiaries" of "hand-me-down" curricula… [Indeed, the children's] case is one of social justice, in which difference is encountered not as an "other" to be replaced by one dominant, powerful discourse, but to be brought into dialogue as a democratic partner in the mutual interplay of learning, in the process of evolution within and between the everyday knowledge of children and the disciplinary knowledge of subjects' (2011, pp. 14 & 13).

When drawing together over 150 picture books, our intention was for pupils to identify their own lived experience in the materials in their schools and classrooms, rather than always seeing 'traditional' images of families and homes and wondering why their own was different. As I have noted elsewhere (Woolley, 2010), one teacher with whom I spoke had not considered the families portrayed in the resources he used with his year 2 class. Thus, when I asked how many of his pupils lived with two parents of different gender, he answered 'none'. Yet, he was surprised that he had not considered whether his classroom resources reflected the real-life experiences of his pupils.

Utilising picture books

The following is a small selection of picture books reviewed in *Family Diversities Reading Resource* (Morris and Woolley, 2017). Each is used to highlight an aspect of geographical understanding that might help to develop self-esteem, empathy or mutual understanding with pupils.

Ali's Story (Maldonado, 2015)

This is the story of ten-year-old Ali's journey from Afghanistan. When the war escalates, his family decides that it is time to flee to a safer place. They head for Europe, but Ali's parents cannot complete the journey because they do not have passports. Ali continues to travel with his grandmother. Four years later Ali finally receives a telephone call telling him that his parents are safe. This real-life account of a refugee is told in Ali's own words, which puts the story on an accessible scale, and may be useful for teachers and parents/carers to address news stories about refugees, or with pupils who have had a similar experience. It is based on a real-life testimony.

Do You Sing Twinkle?: A story about remarriage and new family (Levins, 2010)

A boy and his brother have to make a hard choice when their mum finds a new partner and moves away. Instead of being able to spend half of each week with mum and half with dad, they now live with dad and visit mum, and their new step-sisters, on alternate weekends. Gradually, the boys' experience increasing unhappiness, and share this with each parent. Mum starts to make increased contact, and makes sure that they have time together. *Do You Sing Twinkle?* is useful because it stresses how hard parents have to work to support their children. The book includes notes to support parents in its use. The book focuses on the personal issues that arise when living in two locations, including at a distance from one parent.

Football Star (Javaherbin, 2014)

Paulo Marcelo Feliciano intends to be a football star. He lives in Brazil, and hopes that his achievements will mean that his mum does not have to work long hours in the future. After finishing work, Paulo goes to play football. Part way through the game a player is injured and Paulo votes to allow a girl (his little sister, Maria) to join in. Maria turns out to be a great success. This very engaging story focuses on the dreams of an ambitious boy and his hard work to reach his goal. It shows Paulo's relationships with his family and friends – particularly his support for Maria's abilities. This book presents optimism and ambition in difficult circumstances, in which a boy works hard to supplement his family income.

Here I Am (Kim, 2014)

This book shows a boy taking his first tentative steps in a new location. We see elements of his journey to his new home, his family, his anxiety and confusion, and the way in which he starts to make sense of his new world. When he loses a seed – carried from his previous home – it opens up a whole new world of experience for him. This book will be useful when considering the lives of those who have

A small selection of picture books reviewed in *Family Diversities Reading Resource.* With kind permission of the publishers.

to move to an unfamiliar place and the challenges they face. It encourages readers to see a change in location positively, by showing the boy growing in confidence and finding happiness in his new world.

Picnic in the Park (Griffiths and Pilgrim, 2007)

It is Jason's fifth birthday and he is to have a picnic party in the local park. He has invited all his friends and their families, who arrive with various food and gifts. The families represented are diverse and include people from different ethnic backgrounds, adoptive and foster families, a child using a wheelchair, children with one and two parents and a single person. The picnic turns out to be a celebration of the diversity of families while set in the shared space of a municipal park.

The Silence Seeker (Morley, 2009)

Joe has new neighbours. His mum explains that they are asylum seekers, but Joe mishears and thinks that they are 'silence seekers'. When he meets the new boy next door, Joe offers to take him to find some silence, but wherever they explore there is noise and busyness. The next day, the boy and his family have gone. Joe checks all the haunts that they visited together, but there is no sign of the other boy. Joe hopes that they have moved on to find the silence they sought. The book illustrates how families are sometimes displaced in search of peace (here, literal peace away from a war zone) but one that is misheard and misunderstood (in a profound way) as peace and quiet.

Showing what we value

Books such as those discussed above provide opportunities for pupils to explore lives similar to, and lives that are very different from, their own. They offer a 'one step distant' technique for pupils to consider the experiences of others, which removes some of the immediacy of issues from one's own home situation. The inclusion of such books in school libraries reflects the make-up of our society, the issues that pupils frequently see in the news, and shows that such matters are considered important enough to be part of the school community. A failure to include this type of book suggests, by omission, that the issues are not important. By comparing and contrasting their lives with those portrayed in the stories, pupils can explore their own personal spaces of life experience, at home, in class and in the wider world.

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PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY IN PRACTICE

This page offers further ideas for using the contents of this issue of *Primary Geography* in practice in your classroom. Share your ideas inspired by this journal on Twitter @The_GA #PriGeogJournal

Article	In practice
Trout, silver streams and waterfalls	• Bring geographical fieldwork into your own classroom, be it with a fish tank or some plants • Look up local story tellers and work with them to teach geography through creative arts and literacy • Use the activity worksheet pack that supports this work: *http://ures-burnley.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Creative-worksheet-pack-for-RIC-Final-version-May-2015.pdf*
Intertwined stories: Making sense of Europe	• The idea of using teachers as characters for the pupils to question and find out from can be applied to many different topic areas. Visit *http://mantleoftheexpert.com* for further information • Link your work with the Philosophy for Children style of learning: *www.sapere.org.uk* • Take a look at the book *Learning Through Theatre* and incorporate creative and dramatic ideas of your own: *http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=FecdAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA56&lpg=PA56&dq#v=onepage&q&f=false*
'Pack your bag, we're moving!'	• This article synthesises really well with Sally Robbins' work on 'Migrants, Rights and Values' (*Primary Geography*, Spring 2017). Look at these two articles together and use the ideas to create your own lessons to challenge pupils' perceptions of migration • Try out the technique Sarah uses, whereby the pupils act out a role-play situation but every so often they are stopped in mid-act and asked questions about thoughts and feelings in character: this is a really effective way to assess the pupils' developing thoughts and perceptions
How do maps and globes represent our world?	• Use Oxfam's series of super resources and activities using the IWB. One of these is a globe that can be actively flattened, another challenges pupils to see the differences between different world projections, and a third has a mole that digs through the world and out the other side – can you guess where she'll come out? *www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/mapping-our-world*
Landscapes and bed sheets	• The premise for this activity is to use everyday objects to demonstrate geographical patterns and processes. A visit to the online archive of *Primary Geography* (free to all *PG* subscribers) will offer further ideas, such as Niki Whitburn's 'Fossil Food' (*Primary Geography*, Summer 2013): *www.geography.org.uk* • Find your own inspiration at the GA Annual Conference, which is always full of interesting presentations, sessions and activities. Remember that students gain free entry!
A woodland 'What if…?'	• This is a superb example of local geography and enquiry based learning. Keep an eye on local news reports to see if there are planning proposals to investigate, or create your own proposals • There is an additional resource that is used to great effect here… students. Universities and Teacher Training Institutes are often very keen on liaising with schools, so contact your local ITT provider to see if students there would be interested in a mutual learning project
Challenging geography through silent debate	• Try using some of these excellent resources to follow up on Silent Debate as a way of encouraging deeper thinking about issues: *www.tidegloballearning.net/resources/silent-debate* *https://teachingorlearning.wordpress.com/tag/silent-debate/* *www.pedagoo.org/silent-debating/*
Floods, deserts and disposable nappies	• Try setting up a 'flood zone' in an outdoor area. The pupils can experiment with different flood measures using natural or man-made materials, and try ripping up a nappy and using the nappy gel to build a defence wall
Picture this: Developing relatedness and relationships	• Try using one of the following resources linking geography with stories and literacy: *The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Story* (*www.geography.org.uk/shop*) A Different Story KS2 (*www.tidegloballearning.net/primary-early-years/different-story-ks2*) Using Story for Global Learning (*www.tidegloballearning.net/primary-early-years/using-story-%E2%80%A6-global-learning*)
To challenge or not? Lev Vygotsky and primary geography	• This article will be of interest to many Primary Teacher Training students who will seek to use some of these ideas in assessments. Read more about Vygotsky: *www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html* • Try developing your own lesson from one of the ideas, and assess your pupils' progress, not just in terms of development of knowledge, but also of skills and understanding • Visit the GA website and journals for supporting material on the topics in this article, as well as other examples of locality based primary geography topics, such as the Young Geographers project: *www.geography.org.uk* • Nature Detectives has a range of resources for geography and trees, including useful keys and spotting guides: *www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives*

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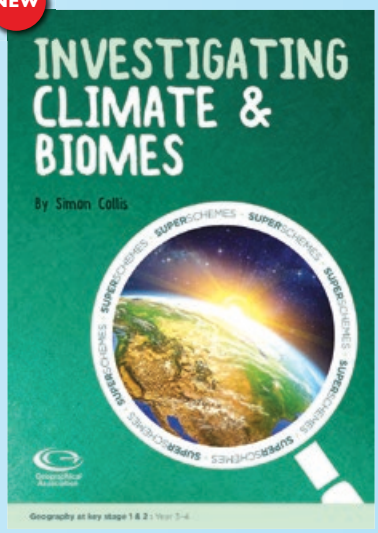

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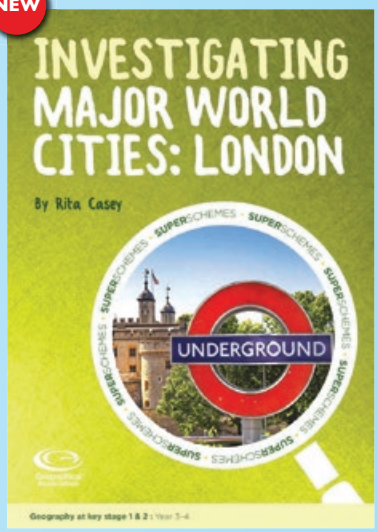

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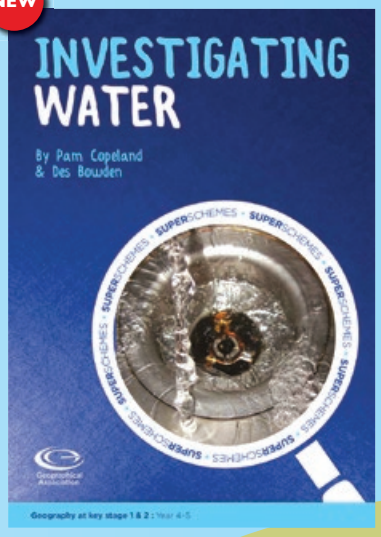

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