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2005 Volume III: History in the American Landscape: Place, Memory, Poetry

What Is Home?: Place as a Factor in Culture, History and Perspective

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Justification

The setting in which history takes place is never simply a backdrop to the human drama, rather it is a potent influence in and of itself. Throughout history there are examples of timing, weather, or geography greatly influencing the course of events. From the destruction of the Spanish Armada, to the success of the early Islamic armies in North Africa, to the failure of Viking settlements in Newfoundland and North America, the pages of history are rife with the influence of place on specific events.

It would however be a mistake to assume that the setting of an historical tale plays simply the role of fortune, that setting involves good luck or bad luck and nothing more. Aside from the influence that a storm, or geography, or a subtle climate shift can have on specific events, setting has been the guiding hand that has influenced cultures, molded nations, and even, at times, shaped the course of human evolution. Cultures nurtured in warm climates may develop social norms based around being out of doors, like Aristotle's classes taking place in courtyards of Athens. Colder climes on the other hand develop styles and norms more conducive to dark winters and cold weather.

As in literature, setting is an undeniable force throughout history and no understanding of history can be complete without an adequate understanding of setting. It is therefore imperative that any study of history contain a study of setting. As history teachers, we are constantly wrestling with this concept, seeking ways of presenting the setting of history that will help our students to understand.

History takes place on a human level, and the goal of any exploration of setting has to be an understanding of setting at a human scale. Unfortunately many of our tools for exploring this concept fall short of this goal. A true experience of history needs to include both a human level and a global level understanding of events.

On the global scale, teachers make use of maps and geography lessons. We study gulfs and peninsulas, and panic if our book of blank maps is lost. We might study latitude and longitude, or climate. This leads to wide global assumptions, which may or may not be correct. For instance, one might draw the conclusion that London is cold based on its latitude, or that the clothing of Saudi Arabia would be scant, given its warm location. Global assumptions such as these are useful in some measure, in that they allow students to make some assumptions, but they can be dangerous.

On the human scale, teachers are constantly striving to find examples or illustrations that can bring history down to the human level. We will show video clips, read primary source documents, or simply describe the topic at hand. While we might accomplish the short-term goal of helping students "see" the setting in question, these efforts rarely result in a wider understanding of that setting.

All of these strategies have their place, and might further our student's understanding of the immediate concept, but they do not accomplish the goal of a total history experience. These strategies expose the weakness in our repertoire. The tools we use demonstrate the piecemeal nature of our approach to the setting of history. Though each tool and each strategy fills an immediate need, they do not tie the concept of setting together in any coherent way.

The solution to this problem may be a change in the way we as history teachers view the concept of place. Most history teachers lack the knowledge and background to do justice to the concept of place. It is not enough to ask our students to "picture yourself in a field full of buffalo," or to read a first hand account. We as history teachers must build a deeper understanding of place for ourselves and for our students.

Unfortunately many teachers lack a full grasp of place as a teaching tool and therefore do not give adequate time to developing an understanding of place with their students. In spite of this, we make use of place every day in our classes without actually knowing it. If as teachers, we embrace a broader view of place, we can take this idea which we use every day and turn it into a cornerstone of our teaching in a way that strengthens our courses and our students.

If place is used consistently throughout our teaching and we strive to discuss place in new terms, we can bring history down to the human scale by giving our students the framework to help to put themselves into history, and imagine themselves in situations that were previously alien to them. This framework can be another lens through which our students view history.

This revised understanding of place begins at the most basic levels for the teacher and the students. Every person has a unique and preexisting notion of place. If properly discussed, or led, every student will be able to identify this notion and discuss it in some depth. The right leading questions, such as "What makes this place?" or "What qualities go into a place?" can lead to a lengthy discussion. In doing so we as teachers can make an extremely abstract concept into an extremely concrete one.

The difficulties that historical settings pose do not exist when discussing modern places that students deal with every day. A student's home or school possesses sensory characteristics, layers of understanding, and abstract attributes that make them the place that students know. Any class discussion can center on any aspect of a place and still have relevance if it contributes to the class understanding of place.

Place is after all the convergence of the natural environment, the social environment, the physical or built environment, and the time period. These four parts make up the framework of place, and exist in every place. So we as teachers can use them to frame our discussion of history within our classes. They are also critical in understanding individuals, and individual perspective. This framework allows us to literally ask the question "Where was this person coming from?"

Though it is always important to understand where a historical person or account comes from, this kind of study cannot begin without a student understanding where he or she comes from. To fully understand another's perspective, one must understand one's own. Thus it becomes extremely useful to discuss the elements that contribute to one's own perspective, before attempting to understand the perspective of

another.

So we return to the question, "Where is this person coming from?" The question in and of itself is a tricky one. For students it can be extremely difficult given all of the factors that go into the answer. Where did the person live? What was the society like at the time? What did they eat for breakfast? These are all extremely relevant questions when seeking to understand the perspective of another. Some questions however are more meaningful than others. The key to this whole process is helping students to determine which questions are meaningful and which questions are not. Though it is possible to discern all manner of important information from a discussion of breakfast foods, it is not necessarily practical to answer every question one might have when time is limited.

Without a critical understanding of perspective, it is easy to fall into the trap of treating history as simply a collection of facts. While in some measure such an assessment of history is true, it also removes the depth and beauty from the subject. If our sole task as history teachers is to force the memorization of facts, using the textbook as the chief arbiter of what is true and what is not, then our whole subject has become little more than an annoying elective, rather than the means to an educated citizenry.

The argument could be made that in some schools we are already reaching that point. It is our job as teachers to change that fact, and perspective is one of the keys to that change. Perspective is not only important in terms of what the reader of history brings to the table, but also it is important in terms of what biases the writer of history includes, and what actions the actor in history takes.

Furthermore, the ability to weigh different perspectives and come up with an individual point of view is arguably all that matters in terms of social studies in the eyes of the State of Connecticut. The CAPT test has no section detailing American History, nor does it test an understanding of geography or world civilizations. The CAPT test does however measure our student's abilities to read various sources and come up with their own point of view on an issue, which may or may not have any meaning to our students.

Given that perspective in all its forms is an important part of any history education, it must be one of our primary concerns as history teachers. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. Those who would have us simply teach to the test would perhaps suggest that we as teachers need only give our students many opportunities to read multiple sources on matters they do not care about, and write many CAPT responses to those situations. While this may be effective in teaching our students to pass the CAPT interdisciplinary section, it is not an effective means of developing deep and critical minds.

I am not suggesting that that kind of instruction has no place in our classrooms, rather I am suggesting that the class environments we wish to create require a deeper discussion of perspective. This brings us back to my original question, "Where did they (meaning the writers and creators of history) come from?"

As teachers we must find methods that allow us to bring perspective down from the lofty pillars of weighing disparate points of view on the same factual evidence, to something more meaningful and literal. The words of historians and the actions of the ancients are often filled with subtleties that are lost on the uninitiated. In terms of this discussion, it is useful to begin with the student. Since history occurs on a human scale, such a discussion should begin on one. It is possible to achieve this at the outset of a history course, with a discussion of place.

I am not suggesting that one simply discuss what place is and hope for the best. This idea begins with a very specific place for each student, their home. In doing so we teachers can take this nebulous concept and make

it concrete. In stead of discussing "Where did they come from?" we should begin by asking, "Where do you come from?"

Such a discussion begins with physical descriptions. Students will describe the physical building they live in. The class could discuss architecture, urban planning, or differing materials. Then this discussion would naturally move to the block, or neighborhood the students live in. Eventually the class would move to a point where students were discussing and mapping the geographic region they call home.

Initially this kind of activity may seem elementary, and I admit it would be, however the beauty of an activity such as this is that in the end a teacher and a class may delve as deeply as they wish. Some classes might simply discuss the physical structures that students live in, while others might explore fully the history behind a neighborhood, block or place name.

In any case and in any depth, this kind of discussion can easily segway into a discussion of the student's points of view. Something as simple as discussing residential architecture can lead to a discussion of ethnocentrism and bias. The Connecticut Mastery test recently featured a section on a person's home, including elements like basements, attics and backyards, something that a child raised in an apartment might not be familiar with. Examples such as these abound, and can be used with great success in the classroom even on the most basic levels of this topic. If for example, property value is linked to test scores, and the tests favor suburban students, bias and point of view become readily available as classroom topics.

The question "Where do you come from?" can become a standard in the classroom beyond this unit, but for the purposes of this unit it is the starting point. Architecture and neighborhoods are only the first step. Each student has his or her own point of view, and with proper guidance it is possible to turn this simple question into the touch stone for the entire course of study.

Especially in a diverse community students will have many different answers, but the key to teaching the concept is exploring as many as possible. When bringing this concept up with students it is important to expose how the student's points of view might differ. As teachers we should find common places, and common points to discuss through student experiences. Any place that many students have experienced will be experienced differently.

For example, one might use varying experiences of the New Haven Green as a starting point for common discussion (though any common place would serve just as well for the purpose of exposing difference). As a freshman in high school in the mid nineties, my first experience of the New Haven Green was to be offered drugs by a stranger there. This is abnormal when compared to my later experiences with the Green, however, it is relevant in terms of the discussion. Undoubtedly there will be some students in the class who will have had largely positive experiences with the Green, and others may not have ever seen the place.

So, with a short, though progressive discussion, it is possible to bring a class that may have no prior experience discussing place, to the initial stages of understanding the effects of place on perspective. This is of course only the first step on the road to a greater understanding of place, but it has enormous value in and of itself. This step takes what could be a foreign concept, or at least an unidentified one, and quite literally brings it home to the students.

This step also allows us to initiate the framework of discussing history in terms of setting, and historical figures in terms of their perspective. Such a framework can allow for a discussion of history that is inclusive of perspective rather than exclusive. With a framework of understanding of perspective in place, it becomes

possible to take the whole topic to a deeper level of understanding.

That deeper level of understanding is achieved by using the framework outside the concept of a student's home, and outside of the places that they actually know, and into places that are foreign to the whole class. Making this leap requires some scaffolding, but in the end it is entirely possible once the students begin to think in terms of perspective.

Once achieves however, an understanding of place, as it is tied to perspective will allow our students to attain the understanding we strive to lead them to. It will allow them to determine what questions they must ask of history, and what questions they must ask of the actors and the writers and their influences, to develop a deeper understanding as critical thinkers. This allows us to circumvent the objectivity that many historians aspire to, and many simply feign, and dig to the core of what history really is.

This unit seeks to achieve that jump by first setting the stage. The unit itself allows ample time for discussing the student's homes and their lives and their perspectives. We begin with defining place, and we move up Bloom's Taxonomy, from the basic level of defining the concept to the advanced concept of applying and evaluating the concept. The unit then progresses to hypothesizing the impact home has on the student's point of view, and evaluating what parts of home are worthy of preservation. With this framework in place the unit assesses understanding of the concept by testing the framework and its application on a completely foreign environment, East Africa and the beginnings of humanity.

Introduction

The unit itself is originally conceived to work in a large magnet high school, whose population comes from 17 districts including that of New Haven. Therefore some of the activities are geared specifically in the direction on capitalizing of differing understandings of home and place. This will allow some aspects of the unit to function more effectively, but it will also handicap other sections of the unit, especially those that deal with common places, because the list of common places may be relegated to the school and the school alone. That said, all of the activities are possible and useful in a non-magnet situation, and can function even on the level of a neighborhood school.

What follows is a set of lessons and explanations designed to serve as a guide for an exploration of place. There are modifications included in the explanation, but as these lessons are guides, there is a great deal of room for individual modification.

Objectives

As a result of this unit the students will be able to

1. Define place.

2. Define home, creating a cognitive map of their home.
3. Evaluate home as a place, designing means of saving some specific elements of home for future generations.
4. Apply the concept of place to a completely foreign locale by exploring the place where humanity began.
5. Write an essay, which applies the concept of place to the origins of humanity, and evaluates the impact place can have on people.

Strategies

Lesson 1: Defining Place

The unit begins with a day of defining place. For class discussion at the outset I will ask my students the simple question "Where are we?" This question allows for all level of answers and therefore works well as a beginning point. With a certain amount of prodding, it will be possible for the class to generate answers on every scale conceivable, from the classroom, to the address of the school, to the order of the planets in our solar system, to our galaxy.

With this discussion in place it will become possible to define place. It is important to keep in mind the four elements that go into our formal definition, Climate, Culture, Architecture, and Geography. It would be a mistake to simply list these on the board and ask the students to memorize them, in that such a decision would eliminate the necessity of the students taking ownership of their definition and ensuring that it represents their thought process. It will be vital however to ensure that these elements are represented in our ultimate definition.

This can be achieved by referring back to the previous brainstorming activity. Different elements of place will be represented by the various answers that the students put forth. For example, while Architecture is represented by the discussion of the school, Climate may be discussed by asking what elements went into that architecture. Furthermore, while geography may be represented by the discussion of the school's location, culture may be approached by discussing how the school got its name, or what language the address is in on school stationary. By carefully questioning the students on matters such as these; it is possible to create a definition that is both unique to the class, and in keeping with our broad, formal interpretation of the concept.

Once the term is defined, it will be necessary to revisit it and take a deeper look at the place in which the class exists at that moment. With culture, architecture, climate, and geography on the table, the original question "where are we?" will take on a whole new angle, and meaning. The students can then, individually or in groups create a description of the place that they inhabit at the moment, focusing on any element of the definition while ultimately addressing (as will be the instructions) all elements of the definition. This activity

will allow for a great deal of creativity and need only be bounded by time and the resources available in the classroom. Certainly written descriptions function well, but pictures, artwork, poetry, and many other media might be used to fully approach the topic.

Lesson 2: Home as a Place

With a sound class definition in place, and descriptions of my classroom in multiple mediums, I intend to head home. The next step in the process, and the next day in the unit is an assessment of home as a place. To begin, it will be useful to review the work from day one, which dealt with what place is and what our definition of it was. We will also use this opportunity to discuss the various attempts at describing our classroom, or indeed our place as described by the class.

Having completed the review, I will put the word home on the board, and home will be the topic of brainstorming today. Most students have a place they consider to be home, and that will be an adequate beginning. This section, especially in an economically diverse community may require a certain amount of sensitivity, but the most important thing to remember is that a class definition of home should not be so specific as to limit itself to a house or an apartment block.

In this case it will be important to define home as a place rather than simply as a thing. For the purposes of this unit, home acts as our prime example of what a place is, and the elements that can go into a place. It is therefore important to ensure that your students, through guiding questions if necessary, arrive at an understanding of home that includes Architecture, Culture, Climate and Geography. These four elements will require each student to delve deeply into what they consider to be their home. Beyond the structure they live in, does home include the Spanish market on the corner, the hair salon up the street, the park, the basketball court, the school, or the church? All of these places and more are possible components of what a student considers to be their home.

More over, all of the places have atmospheres and qualities that it might be useful to discuss. The qualities that go into a place, and the elements that make it up, all have value in such a discussion, and should not be squashed. Each of these elements will be valid and useful later in the unit.

A good method of achieving the goal of defining place might be to ask students to list all of the elements that make up their home, and couch the activity extremely specifically. The question could be framed "List everything that makes up your home, leaving nothing out that could be left out of your home, and adding nothing that doesn't make that place your home." The wording is extremely specific and would most probably be adapted, but in the end the point is to create a list of things that are vital to the student's home. It may be necessary to include guiding questions here such as, where do you get your groceries? Or where do you go for fun?

The main goal of this discussion of home is to prepare the students to create a cognitive map of their lives, and their city. Given that I work in a magnet school, I have enormous leeway in terms of this mapping project. Some of my students will have an intimate knowledge of the area surrounding the school. Others will only know the road that leads into the school, and the area surrounding their dwelling. This will allow for extremely varied maps in the end.

The process of cognitive mapping tends to work best with adults, or at least students who are old enough to know the names of regions and streets. For example, if a student takes the M2 bus every single day to get to school, they may understand that it runs down Willow Street on its way downtown, but they might not know

the name of the street. That is acceptable, given that a cognitive map need not have all of the names of all of the streets in place.

The process will begin with an explanation of the assignment. The assignment itself will be to create a map of your home, including all of the elements that surround your home, and also includes our high school. Given that I work with freshmen, it is probable that in the first 3 weeks of school they do not consider our school as part of their home, but it should be included anyway.

The students should include whatever elements landed on their list in their map, thereby allowing them to explore the geography of those places. This activity will not only give us the chance to explore common places, but also allows us to explore disparate understanding of the term home, and the greater New Haven area.

Ideally this project will result in maps that expose both geographic and cultural differences in an area. Though the maps will likely be based only loosely on scale if they are at all, differences in lifestyle should become obvious. Especially for those done in magnet schools, the differences between suburban and urban life should become readily apparent in the size, scale, dimensions, and places included in the maps.

It might be useful here to look at the maps critically making use of actual maps, such as those available at maps.google.com. Such a view will allow students to compare what they have created to actual maps. Google maps also allow users to look at aerial photographs of the region, and maps made up of satellite imagery. These types of resources can be used to great effect in discussing the actual makeup of the region mapped. One should be careful not to allow the use of the maps in advance of creating cognitive maps however, in that access to actual maps would rob the cognitive maps of their individual character.

Lesson 3: How does home affect an individual?

The next step, and the next day in the unit will be devoted to asking the question "How does your home affect you?" This is the point at which it is important to take a critical look at both culture and commonalities in the student's previous work on their cognitive maps.

First, I will start by reviewing the qualities of the students' homes. Geography, architecture and climate will be primary purposes of the review in that the whole lesson is devoted to culture and how places affect it. It will be especially relevant to figure out how geography, architecture and climate influence the culture of the students.

This task will be accomplished by brainstorming culture in general, and specifically what elements go into a culture. It will be necessary as the teacher to expand on specific ideas, or allow the students to expand on these ideas as they pertain to the other three aspects of place. For example if a student mentions fashion as part of a culture, one might link it to climate, or if a student mentions food, one might link it to geography and climate.

Once a solid framework exists in terms of what culture is and what comprises it, then students must look into their own lives, and determine what aspects of their culture derive from place or places. This is of course an individual idea, but students who actively list similar cultural traits in their own work might work together in their discussion of how a place has influenced their culture.

Each student should be able to accomplish this task, but if they are having trouble, or need coaxing, they may

be paired up, or guided by the teacher. Culture is a sizable topic, and some would say it is the whole story when it comes to understanding history, but this process breaks it down into slightly more manageable parts.

Partly as a means of moving in a different direction for the students' willingness to participate, partly as a means of later introducing perspective, the lesson will progress to group discussions of common places. Students will be broken into groups based on what areas they have in common and instructed to discuss experiences of the common place together, with the ultimate goal of creating a "fair" description of the place that circumvents the biases that individuals may have. This may require a good deal of compromise, but should illustrate that while in some cases the students will have similar experiences and view points, in others, points of view will be at odds. This will also serve to illustrate how differing homes and differing points of view influence opinions and descriptions of a place.

Lesson 4: What is the value of home?

With an understanding of home, culture and place under our belts, it is now time to evaluate places critically, to determine their worth and discuss the idea of preserving them. With this section the unit has moved up the ladder of Bloom's Taxonomy, to a point where the students are critically determining what is of value to them and their homes, and ranking those aspects according to what is most vital to pass on to future generations. It will be necessary to couch this lesson in terms of the place's importance to them now, as well as the importance to the future, given that the future itself is sometimes a nebulous concept to a fourteen-year-old whose chief concern is what is going on this weekend.

The lesson will begin by creating a list. Each student will create a list of 10 things that are most important to the place they call home. This need not be a list of 10 places, just 10 things that make the place they call home, home. In my case the list would certainly include people, smells and abstract ideas, all of which will be useful for the purposes of this unit. This need not be a list of 10 buildings most in need of saving from the viewpoint of the students. It is however entirely possible that the students will have a list of 10 buildings that are more important than anything else to them.

With the list complete the students will be asked to think about and discuss with the class, what aspects of that list should be saved for future generations, and how would one go about doing that. This discussion should include all of the qualities and elements that go into a place, and should not ignore anything, even though the goal will ultimately be the preservation of a specific place, in a specific way.

The students will then have to choose one thing on the list, the one most important aspect of a place that needs to be saved above all others, and work in a group to plan a means of saving it. The goal is to create a plan to pass a specific place on to future generations. It may be necessary, if the lists are too ethereal and philosophical, to create new lists of places that make up home in order to allow for the creation of a plan for preservation of something more concrete than a recipe, or an idea. This section will ultimately answer the question "What is the most valuable aspect of your home?"

Depending upon the character and skill level of the class, it might be useful at this point to allot time for presentation of the work completed by the students. In many cases this work could be extremely valuable in exposing the values of a student, the importance of specific places, and the impact of these places on the student and their culture.

Lesson 5: Place as a Concept in a Foreign Environment

The next phase of this unit moves beyond developing our original framework to actually put that framework to the test. It is my intention that an initial discussion of place in terms of home, can progress into a discussion of place as a concept. I also hope that this discussion of place, and the elements that go into a place can serve as a framework to view history critically. The unit itself will be assessed based on the student's ability to take that framework and apply it to completely different situations. If this task succeeds, then place has become a concept that can be used time and time again to help students to understand perspective, and the physical place people inhabited. If it fails, more scaffolding will be required to initiate the students into the understanding that we seek.

In the second phase, the assessment phase, of the unit, we will turn our discussion to human roots in East Africa. We will begin this section by setting the stage through the use of specific descriptions applied to our framework. The teacher will review what a place is before seeking to allow the students to explore the specific place that was East Africa thousands of years ago.

With the framework and definition in place, the students will be given descriptions of the place in question, and asked to fill in their framework. The descriptions can come from anywhere but they need to be accurate enough to fully flesh out a place. I have chosen to use non-fiction narrative description, poetry, and images, however many other mediums might be chosen (Documentaries, films, fiction, etc.)

The students will begin this section by applying their recent work in describing place to East Africa. They will use the provided resources, selections from various East African poets, selections from Ernest Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*, and images, both ground level and aerial from a Google image search, and Yann Arthus-Bertrand's *Earth From Above*, to create a description of the place as a place. The process of creating this description will both allow them to develop an understanding of the place, which will be useful later, and to demonstrate their understanding of place as a concept, and the process of describing a place.

I have chosen human origins in Africa for two reasons. Firstly, there is little evidence, beyond archaeology, of actual human events. Most of our information is based on large-scale trends not small scale, human scale life. This allows for a deep discussion of the place, and many hypotheses without fear of corruption of the process through the use of an accurate modern historical perspective.

Secondly, and equally importantly, I am seeking to use this as a framework throughout my course. I am creating an opening unit, which will allow me to revisit the framework throughout the year for the purposes of visualizations, perspective, and understanding.

Thus the class will take a look at travel- writing, images, and poetry to help the students create a solid idea of what this place was like in terms of geography and climate.

Lesson 6: Hypothesizing Lifestyles and Culture in Ancient East Africa

The next step, and one of the last, will be to discuss what we know currently about the culture of these early humans. This will require exploration of the Hunter-Gatherer lifestyle, including diet, challenges, habits, and so on. The students will research this topic through the inquiry process to complete a description of the culture of hunter-gatherer tribes.

The students will make use of the inquiry process, whereby they research the answer to a specific guiding

question to gain a better understanding of the hunter gatherer lifestyle. With this deeper understanding they will describe that lifestyle through discussion of the challenges that faces hunter gatherers. They will then make use of this description to hypothesize one aspect of the culture of these people. They will choose one challenge and suggest how ancient East Africans might have dealt with it. Then for homework they will come up with five separate arguments, or pieces of evidence to support their hypothesis.

For the purposes of this inquiry process I will be making use of our class textbook, which is McDougal Littell's *Patterns of Interaction*, which has some excellent information regarding the hunter gatherer lifestyle. This particular text however is by no means the only resource that would work in this situation. The goal is to allow the students to explore the hunter gatherer lifestyle, and therefore any research materials or processes that allow them to do so would function here.

In this lesson the students' will explore and demonstrate their understanding of the interaction between place and culture by creating hypotheses regarding the lifestyle, the challenges and the attitudes of these people. It will expand to encompass hypotheses in terms of cultural choices regarding clothing, food, relationships, and language. The students will make educated guesses as to what choices might be made, and seek to test these hypotheses through research and the creation of a sound argument.

Lesson 7: Culminating Essay

Finally the unit will culminate with a discussion of the influences at play among the earliest humans. The students will be asked to write an essay in which they choose one characteristic, challenge or trait and explain how they think these early humans might have handled the challenge. Their essays must demonstrate an understanding of the influence of place on individuals and cultures, and it must adequately prove their hypothesis rhetorically.

Rather than include a lesson plan here, in that each class will start from very different places where writing skills are concerned, I will simply include the essay assignment. With different classes, different levels of scaffolding will be necessary in terms of writing skills. It is therefore my intent to use the various written assessments embedded in the unit to determine what the expectations of this lesson should entail.

The assignment itself builds of the work of lesson six, asking the students to write an essay proving their hypothesis from the night before. At this point the students should be ideally situated to complete this task.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: Defining Place

Goal : To define place for the purposes of using the concept throughout the unit.

Objectives :

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to,

1. Discuss the question "Where are we?"

2. Define place.
3. Create a written description of their current location.

Materials :

Board, marker, notebooks, pens, paper

Anticipatory Set:

Students will write 5 lines in their notebooks answering the question "Where are we?"

Procedure:

1. The teacher will lead the class in discussion of the anticipatory set putting all possible answers on the board.
2. When the class has sufficiently covered all possible versions and scales of the teacher will lead the class through guiding questions in defining place.
3. With a definition on the board, including climate, culture, architecture, and geography the teacher will break the students into small groups (if groups are to be used), and explain the assignment.
 - a. Assignment: Write an explanation, in writing, of where we are now (from your perspective), which specifically deals with the elements of our definition of place.
4. The teacher will circulate around the room checking on the work as it progresses and helping those who need it.
5. When the students have completed their work the teacher will lead the class in reviewing their new understanding of their current location

Closure :

The teacher will review the lesson, and the definition, making sure that each student is prepared to do the homework.

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based on the work that they produce.

Homework :

Write 1 page describing your home as a place, making sure to address the 4 elements of our definition.

Lesson 2: Home as a Place

Goal: To explore the concept of place as it applies to one's home.

Objectives :

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Brainstorm the concept of home.
2. Define and Discuss home, keeping in mind our definition of place.
3. Create a cognitive map of their home, which must include the school.

Materials :

Blank white paper, pens, notebooks, board, marker,

Anticipatory Set:

List 10 things that make up your home as a place.

Procedure :

1. The teacher will begin by discussing/brainstorming the anticipatory set with the class, putting their answers on the board.
2. When this is complete the teacher will lead the class in defining home, ensuring that our definition of home is in keeping with the class definition of place.
3. The students will then be asked to complete a cognitive map of their home, which must include our school.
 - a. Assignment: each student must use the blank paper provided to create a hand-drawn map, which includes all of the things that they have put on their list, and all of the places they would consider home.
 - b. These places should be defined as any place regularly frequented, or important to each student's life.
 - c. These places should be labeled on the map. (See Diagram)
4. The teacher will circulate to ensure that the work is coming along and answer any questions the students might have.
5. When the map are complete or seem to be complete the teacher will lead the class in discussing the activity, discussing boundaries of home, and offering the chance for some of the students to present their maps.

Closure :

The teacher will review the boundaries of home, and the mapping process.

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based upon the work they produce.

Homework :

1 pg. What does your cognitive map say about you and your culture.

Lesson 3: How does home affect an individual?

Goal : To explore how a person's home affects their culture.

Objectives :

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Brainstorm the qualities of culture.
2. Explain what elements of culture derive from place.
3. Create a "fair" description of a place that they share with other students in the room.

Materials :

Board, Marker, pen, notebook

Anticipatory Set:

Write 5 lines on the way in which your home affects who you are.

Procedure :

1. Class will begin with a brief review of the qualities of home through brainstorming.
2. When this is complete, then the teacher will lead the class in discussing the anticipatory set.
3. The teacher will then put the word "Culture" on the board, asking the students to list everything they can come up with that might be part of a culture
 - a. The teacher will use every opportunity given to show how individual answers derive, in part, from place.
4. The students will then be asked to list (individually) elements of their own culture that derive from place, or places
5. When this is complete the teacher will lead the students in sharing their work, or parts of it.
6. The students will then be tasked with using their cognitive maps to find someone in class whose map includes some, or at least one, of the same places.
7. The groups (organically formed around common places) will then have the remainder of the class to create a common description of that place, one that derives from the differing experiences of that place

Closure :

The teacher will review what was done today, and assign the homework.

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based on their contributions, their descriptions, and their homework

Homework :

Create an assessment- Write one page on how you feel about the description created by your group.

Lesson 4: What is the value of home?

Goal: to critically evaluate elements of their own homes in terms of their value as a place and their value to each individual student.

Objectives :

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. List the 10 things about their home, which they consider to be the most important elements of their home.
2. Design ways in which these things could be saved for future generations.
3. Determine what of the 10 things is most important, and defend their choice

Materials :

Board, marker, art supplies, pen, notebook

Anticipatory Set:

Create a list of the 10 most important elements of your home (the list can be made up of anything)

Procedure :

1. The teacher will lead the students in brainstorming their ideas, listing them on the board.
2. With a sound list of all the most important elements of the student's homes on the board, the teacher will ask the question "what is the importance of saving these things for the future?"
3. The class will discuss the question- the teacher will make sure that all the elements of place are addressed
4. The students will then be asked to choose the one thing on their list that is more important than anything else
5. Using whatever means are available (essays, art supplies, computers, etc.) the students will be tasked with designing a means of saving their choice for future generations.
6. The students will be given time to work, but time should be set aside at the end of class for discussion of their work.

Closure :

The teacher will lead the class in discussing what they chose to save, and how they intended to save it.

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based on their work in class and their homework.

Homework :

1 pg. Why is it important to save elements of our culture for future generations?

Lesson 5: Place as a Concept in a Foreign Environment

Goal: To explore the concept of place as it pertains to a foreign location

Objectives :

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Read descriptions and view pictures of the natural environment of East Africa
2. Discuss East Africa as a place
3. Synthesize these descriptions into a basic explanation of what life would have been like in the natural environment of East Africa

Materials :

Excerpts from *Green Hills of Africa*, William Kamera "Poem in Four Parts," Amin Kassam "Sunset," Yusuf Kassam "The Splash," Rose Mbowa "That Game," Internet linked computers, board, marker, notebooks, pen

Anticipatory Set:

5 lines, Describe Africa as a place.

Procedure :

1. The teacher will begin class by reviewing what a place is and the elements that go into one
2. The teacher will follow up on this by brainstorming with the students what they know/how they would describe Africa as a place (this should derive purely from the student's prior knowledge)
3. With a deeper understanding of the student's prior knowledge in place (as a function of this activity) The teacher will explain the student's task
 - a. At the end of the class the students will be asked to write a description of the natural environment of East Africa.
4. The students will then be broken into 6 groups
5. Then each group will be directed to one of 3 stations (each containing one of the three resources- poetry, narrative, or computers)
6. The groups will have 15 minutes to make use of the resources (read the poetry or the narrative and take notes, or use the computers to do a Google image search for images of the natural environment of East Africa)

7. After 15 minutes the groups will be asked to move to the next station, and after 15 minutes they will move again, so that after 45 minutes they have been to each station.

8. When this is complete the teacher will lead the students in brainstorming a description of Africa again, now with their enhanced understanding.

Closure :

The teacher will wrap up class by reviewing the information briefly, and discussing the homework assignment

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based upon their homework assignment

Homework :

Write a 1-2 page description of the natural environment of East Africa, on a human scale.

Lesson 6: Hypothesizing Lifestyles and Culture in Ancient East Africa

Goal : To assess student understanding of the impact of place on a culture

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to

1. Review culture as a concept
2. Describe the hunter gatherer lifestyle through the inquiry process
3. Hypothesize one characteristic of the culture of ancient East African hunter gatherers and defend your choice

Materials :

Patterns of Interaction , notebooks, pen, board, marker

Anticipatory Set:

The students will list 10 things that make up a culture.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will begin class by going over the Anticipatory Set, by leading the students in brainstorming the elements of culture.
2. The teacher will then put the question "What would life have been like for an ancient East African hunter gatherer?" on the board
3. The teacher will then lead the students in brainstorming ways in which one might answer this question/ the elements of the answer to this question. In this way the teacher can ensure that the students all know what

elements are necessary to answer the question in a satisfactory fashion.

4. The students will then break into pairs and use the book *Patterns of Interaction* to answer the question.
5. The teacher will circulate around the room to ensure that the students are completing the task and answer any questions students may have.
6. When this process is complete the teacher will lead the students in a discussion of what this lifestyle would have been like.
7. The students will then be tasked with hypothesizing one element of the culture of these people. Given the challenges and the lifestyle that these people faced the students will have to choose one element of their culture, one challenge they faced and imagine how the ancient Africans might have dealt with this challenge.
 - a. It may be necessary at this point for the teacher to review what a hypothesis is.
8. The teacher will check each hypothesis before the end of class.

Closure :

The teacher will wrap up class by clarifying/assigning the homework.

Assessment :

The students will be assessed based upon their homework, and their class work.

Homework :

For homework the students will be asked to come up with 5 separate arguments to support their hypothesis.

Essay Assignment.

Introduction

As a culminating project for our unit on place, and culture, I am asking you to put your hypothesis to the test. You have used facts and your imaginations to create a hypothesis, or educated guess as to what ancient East African culture might have been like. Now I want you to make use of your vast skills in written expression to show me the proof of your hypothesis.

Question :

Describe one trait of ancient East African culture at the beginning of humanity, and explain why you believe your hypothesis to be true.

Specifications:

Your essay should be written in the five-paragraph format, with an introduction, conclusion, and 3 supporting paragraphs. It should be between 500 and 600 words, and may be typed or hand written. In either case it must be double-spaced and must include a word count at the end. You will be graded on each of these elements, and therefore should pay close attention to them.

Rubric:

Argument: (25 points)- You will receive a 25 in this area only if you have created a solid hypothesis.

Defense: (25 points)- You will receive a 25 in this area only if you have soundly proven your hypothesis using facts and sound argument.

5 Paragraph Format: (10 points) You will receive a 10 in this area if your work includes an introduction, conclusion and 3 supporting paragraphs.

Length: (10 points) You will receive a 10 in this area if your work is of sufficient length and includes a word count.

Double Spaced: (5 points) You will receive a 5 in this area if your work is double spaced.

Mechanics: (25 points) This is a formal essay and therefore you will receive a 25 only if your essay meets mechanical specifications and is completely free of grammatical errors.

Bibliography

1 . Arthus-Bertrand, Yann. *Earth From Above* . New York, NY: Harry N Abrams, 2002.

Earth From Above is a collection of aerial photographs, which come from all over the world. The photos that appear in the book are high quality, offering aerial views the world over. The book offers students the chance to view the landscape from a novel point of view, and through the eyes of a skilled photographer. The accompanying website also offers a wide selection of photographs.

2. Beck, Roger, Et al. Eds. *World History: Patterns of Interaction* . Boston, MA: McDougal Little, 2003.

Patterns of Interaction is a World History textbook geared toward high school students. It seeks to offer a view of world history as a series of patterns of interaction, and in some measure succeeds and in some measure fails. Though the book makes a valid effort to avoid becoming Eurocentric, it does not succeed. It also tries too hard at times to fit world history into the narrowly prescribed patterns of interaction it outlines.

It does, on the other hand, offer some fairly comprehensive information on the hunter gatherer lifestyle, which makes it a useful resource for this unit.

3. Cook, David, and David Rubadiri. Eds. *Poems from East Africa*. London, U.K: Heinemann, 1971.

This book is a collection of modern verse from East Africa published in 1971. The editor's stated goal was to provide a representative collection of East African verse. This volume provides a reasonable cross section of East African poetry, including very useful poems by William Kamera, Yusuf O. Kassam, and Rose Mbowa, each of whom deals with the natural environment at least in part. In addition to a modest group of poems describing the natural environment, the book includes poetry on the individual, and civilizations, from both published and previously unpublished writers alike. The book itself is part of the African Writers Series, under the editorial

advise of Chinua Achebe.

4. Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place* deals with the concept of place in two distinct phases. The book begins with an exploration of the philosophical and academic underpinnings of the concept of place. She focuses her first three chapters on urban landscape history, sense of place, place memory, urban politics and urban preservation, successfully creating a solid review of the various influences and debates that surround place, and preservation in an urban setting.

The second part of the book chronicles the noble works of the non-profit The Power of Place. The Power of Place, a non-profit founded by the author made a number of separate efforts to help Los Angeles remember her often tumultuous past. This section offers practical and innovative ideas in terms of place memory and preservation, as they were practically put into action.

5. Hemingway, Ernest. *Green Hills of Africa*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.

In this book Ernest Hemingway sought to prove that a work of non-fiction could be as big a success in publishing as a work of fiction. Though not as big a success as many of his other works, he has, in some measure succeeded. In this book Hemingway chronicles a hunting trip taken with his father and mother in Africa in the thirties. By and large it is an exploration of hunting and African safari, though it offers some very poignant looks into the man himself. He includes many vivid descriptions of his experiences, including explanations of the natural environment, making this book particularly useful for the purposes of this unit.

6. <http://maps.google.com/> , Last accessed July 21, 2005.

Google's maps website offers a wide variety of interactive maps from around the world. These maps are reasonably accurate, and in many cases, offer satellite photographs of the region in question. It is therefore possible to use these maps to view regions, or addresses from above, granting a unique perspective on maps in general and specific areas.

7. <http://www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi&q=> , Last accessed July 21, 2005.

Google's image search is one of the best on the internet. It is accessible from all internet ready computers, and provides a wealth of available images for any search. It is particularly useful in educational settings in that it allows students to search for images from pages throughout the web, isolating the images alone.

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