

Lesson 11.5

WHERE ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU?*

Objectives: Students will observe and map patterns of land use in their own neighborhoods, and they will articulate the ways in which their environments help shape their identities.

Materials:

- **Sheet 11.5A:** Take a Walk worksheet
- **Sheet 11.5B:** Student assignment sheet
- A contemporary map of the students' community, either on a transparency, or on photocopies. Your local library should have a recent map available.
- Paper, rulers, pencils, colored pencils

Timing: 4 – 5 class periods

Procedure:

1. Maine's environment is a resource, not only for businesses and industries, but also for its people. Ask students what they think of as "their" environment? How does their environment help shape who they are?
2. Show students the map of their community. Examine it together. What kinds of things do they notice about their town, city, or village? Ask questions like the following:
 - What size is the community in relation to surrounding towns, cities, or villages?
 - Is it urban? Suburban? Rural?
 - If you live on the coast, does the public have access to the beach?
 - Are there lakes in your community? Rivers? Forests? Mountains? Other distinctive land forms or bodies of water?
 - What parts of town are publicly owned? What parts are privately owned?
 - Are there distinct sections of town that show up on the map? Areas that are less populated, or areas that are more commercial, for example?
 - Are there farms nearby? Have your students ever visited one? Does anyone live on one?
 - Any large parks or public recreation areas nearby?
3. Hand out the Take a Walk student worksheets, and go over them with students. For homework, have them walk around their neighborhood and fill these worksheets out. (You may want to adapt these worksheet, based on your knowledge of the students' community and/or the level of the class.)
4. In class the next day, talk about what they observed. Did they notice patterns in the way people in their community use the land? Are there any interesting differences according to neighborhood?

5. Give students the assignment sheet and discuss it together. Allow them to begin the maps of their neighborhoods in class, using the materials you have available. Give them a couple of nights at home to complete their writing assignments.

6. When students have finished their assignments, debrief with them, focusing especially on their predictions for the future of their community. Ask questions like the following:

- How do you think the local industries affect the environment?
- Are there ways you think the environment may change in the near future?
- How might these changes affect your use of the land and water?
- Do you see yourself as personally connected to the land you live on? Or do you feel relatively distant from the land and water that surrounds you? Why?
- Do you think most people in Maine see themselves as connected or distant from their surrounding environment? Why? What about in the whole United States? Might it depend on the kind of community people live in?

Evaluation: Collect student maps and responses and grade them based on the creativity and care they took with their maps, and the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and overall quality of their written responses. Students may include maps and written responses in their Unit Portfolios, if they choose.

Follow up Activities:

- Have students research local industries to find out exactly how they do impact the environment.
- Ask a local environmentalist or representative of an environmental organization to come talk to the class about the characteristics of the local environment.

* This lesson is an adaptation of one that appears on Maine Public Broadcasting's web site, Home: The Story of Maine. It is being reprinted here with permission.

Alignment with the Learning Results:

Grade Level: 6th-8th

Content Area: Social Studies: **GEOGRAPHY**

Standard: **Geographic Knowledge, Concepts, Themes, and Patterns**

Students understand the geography of the community, Maine, and the U.S., and various regions of the world and the geographic influences on life in the past, present, and future.

Descriptor **D1d:** Describe the impact of change, including technological change, on the physical and cultural environment.

**WHERE ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU?
TAKE A WALK STUDENT WORKSHEET**

Every community has a variety of ways in which it uses its land. What kinds of ways do you notice the land being used in your community? Take a long walk around your neighborhood. Answer the following questions as you walk.

1. I live in: (circle one)
 a city a town a small village the country
2. How many homes are there on your street? _____ (If you can't find out exactly, estimate.) Are most of them apartments or houses, or a combination of both?
3. Do the homes have yards? If so, about how big are the yards?
4. How do people use their yards? Do they have gardens? Swing sets? A place for dogs to run? Picnic tables set up for outdoor dining? Give some examples of different ways that people in your neighborhood use their yards.
5. Is there a park nearby? About how big is it?
6. What kinds of things do people do in the park? List as many activities as you can think of.
7. How many trees are there on your street? _____
8. Watch your street for ten minutes. How many cars pass by? _____

9. Would you call your street quiet or busy? Why?

10. How many businesses are there in your neighborhood? (Again, estimate if you don't know the exact number.)

11. What kinds of businesses are they? List them below.

12. Which are there more of in your neighborhood: homes or businesses?

13. Approximately how far away is the nearest farmland from your home?

14. What do they grow there? If you don't know, try to find out.

15. Estimate the amount of land in your neighborhood that is public property (i.e. a city park, roadways, public access beach, etc.).

16. Is there land in your neighborhood that is privately owned but is available for public use? How do people use it?

17. Is there any property in your neighborhood that has been abandoned (homes, farms, vacant lots, etc)? What kind of property is it?

18. Does anyone use the abandoned property? How?

19. On the back of this worksheet, list all the ways that your family uses the land in your neighborhood or community (ride bikes on the roads, garden, hike in the park, swim in the lake, etc.).

Sheet 11.5B

**WHERE ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU?
ASSIGNMENT SHEET**

Though we might take it for granted, we are all affected in some way by the environment that surrounds us. Think about the landscape that surrounds you. What is it like? How do you use it? How does it help make you who you are? In this assignment, you will have a chance to consider these questions. Follow the directions below.

1. Make a map of your neighborhood. First, choose what you will put on your map. You must include your home and your street. You might also want to include your school, your place of worship, a nearby park, woods, or place you like to visit, or a good friend's house. Your map should include places that you consider to be a part of your neighborhood. It does not have to be exactly to scale, but all the places you include on your map should be carefully labeled.

2. Next, describe how you use the land around you. Are you a sailor or a kayaker, because you have access to the ocean? Do you like to fish on a nearby lake or a river? Maybe you play golf, because there is a golf course nearby, or maybe you ride your skateboard in the city square. In about half a page, describe something you normally do in your neighborhood or community. How does where you live affect who you are?

3. Next, think about the businesses and industries in your area. Do some of them use the resources in your community? Name the industries and the resources they use. How do they use those resources? Do the nearby industries threaten the health of the environment in any way?

4. Finally, think about the ways your environment might change in the future. Could the lake you fish in become polluted, for example? Maybe the city you live in could redesign its rundown waterfront area into a public walkway and gathering place. How might the changes you imagine affect how you use the land and water surrounding you? How might the changes affect who you are?