**EXPLORING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PLACES**

**Activity 1 . Introduction to place**

**Step 1 Brainstorm what defines a place.**  
Ask students to brainstorm what defines a place. Provide examples to get them started, such as:

* people
* weather
* landscape
* plant life
* animal life

Have students work in small groups to write their own lists. Then, invite groups to share their ideas and write a class list on the board.  
  
 **Step 2. Have students identify what defines your town as a place.**  
Ask students to think about what defines your town as a place. Have them use the discussion to add ideas to the original list. If needed, prompt them with questions, such as:

* *Who lives here? What languages do they speak?*
* *Is the neighborhood in a city, suburb, or the country?*
* *What is the weather like? How cold or warm does it get? Does it rain much?*
* *What does the land look like? Are there mountains, lakes, or beaches nearby?*
* *What plants and animals live here?*

**Activity 2 . Introduce the concept of natural characteristics of places.**

**Step 1**  
Explain to students that certain things in nature help to define a place. Write the following list of natural characteristics on chart paper:

* weather and temperature
* land and soil
* plant life
* animal life

Have students brainstorm and add their ideas to the list.   
 **Step 2. Introduce the concept of cultural characteristics of places.**  
Explain to students that the people and cultures in a place also help to define a place. Write the following list of cultural characteristics on chart paper:

* languages
* religions
* where people settle
* how people get from place to place
* how money is exchanged
* government

Have students brainstorm and add their ideas to the list. Students may include number of people, how people dress, what they eat, and more. Post the list in the classroom for students to refer to in future activities.  
**Step 3. Have students identify these characteristics in your community.**  
Tell students to think about their own community and what defines it as a place. For each of the natural and cultural characteristics in Steps 1 and 2, discuss them as a class. Ask: *What is this like in our community?*

**Extending the Learning**

Have students pick one natural characteristic and one cultural characteristic of their community to illustrate. Ask them to draw those features. When students are finished, have each show their drawing to the class and explain what feature it shows and why they chose that one. Display the drawings.

**Background Information**

A place is defined by its natural and human features. You can learn a lot about what defines a place by looking at your own community.

**Vocabulary**

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| **human features** | *noun* | characteristics of the environment created by human beings. |  |
| **natural feature** | *noun* | characteristic of a geographic region that was not created by humans. |  |
| **place** | *noun* | area having unique physical and human characteristics. |  |

**area** *noun* particular area of earth's surface.

**region**  *noun* is an area of land that has common features. A region can be defined by natural or artificial features.

**local** *adjective*  having to do with the area around a specific place.

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**Activity 3: Explore a place**

**Step 1: Generate a class list of questions about place.**   
Have students share any questions they have about what defines a place or why it is important.

Ask: *What are you curious about? What would you like to know more about? Brief discussion as a class or in pairs about what natural and cultural features are.*

**Step 2: Introduce the Task**

Research 2 different places in Australia: the local area and one in another Australian state. Find about and then describe 3 natural features and 3 cultural characteristics about the 2 places. Use the blank map provided to locate and label the places you chose to describe.

**Vocabulary:**

cultural characteristic=feature of an area or population that identifies it. Cultural characteristics are often defined as food, language, art, clothing, religion and holidays.