

## Be a geography detective

( [http://www.cce.org/resources/learning\\_centre/classroom\\_activities/geodetective.asp](http://www.cce.org/resources/learning_centre/classroom_activities/geodetective.asp) )

### Time:

One to two hours

### Materials:

- Internet access
- Overhead projector
- Personal journals
- Prepared transparency of a landscape photograph

### Overview

At first glance, a landscape can be beautiful, boring, colourful, disturbing. Using the skills of a geography detective, however, students can learn more about the land and the relationships humans have with it. Students will apply the six essential elements of geography (location, places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and society, and uses of geography) as they make in-depth observations and draw conclusions about historical landscapes. They will demonstrate understanding by writing journal entries, sketching landscapes, and making mental maps.

### Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and discuss the six essential elements of geography
- Use the six essential elements to interpret a landscape
- Incorporate their findings into a journal entry, including a description, sketch, and mental map

### Geographic Skills

- Acquiring Geographic Information
- Organizing Geographic Information
- Analyzing Geographic Information

### Suggested Procedure

#### *Opening:*

Select a landscape photograph from any source. Reproduce it onto a transparency and display it on an overhead projector. Allow the students time to view the landscape. Turn off the projector and ask the students to describe in their personal journals what they saw. Ask students to draw a picture of the landscape or create a mental map of the scene based upon their recollection of the visual image. Once they have completed their journal entries and renderings, explain that they are going to become geography detectives and learn more about this landscape by investigating essential geography questions.

#### *Development:*

Explain to students that one aspect of geography is understanding land, and what its uses are. Write the names of the six essential elements of geography on the board or a blank overhead transparency: the world in spatial terms (location), places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and society, and uses of geography. Explain that these elements help us understand more about our land and our relationships with it. Ask students what they think is meant by each of the elements. Write their responses under each element. After they have shared their thoughts, offer the following guided questions to clarify the elements:

*Location:* Where might this place be located?

*Places and Regions:* What is special about this place? What makes it different from other places? How is this place like others near or around it?

*Physical Systems:* What physical processes shape the features and patterns of the place? What is the weather/climate like?

*Human Systems:* How might people, goods, and ideas travel into and out of this place?

*Environment and Society:* How have people affected this environment? How might this environment affect people?

*Uses of Geography:* How do physical and human features influence historical, current, or future events?

Divide the class into six groups. Assign each group one of the six essential elements of geography. Display the landscape transparency again. Give each group five minutes to brainstorm answers to the related questions about the landscape and to record their ideas. When time is up, allow the groups to share some of their findings. How did this information compare with the original observations? How would they enhance their sketches or mental maps to incorporate what they learned through their geography detective work?

*Closing:*

As a class, discuss the advantages of using the six essential elements of geography as a means for interpreting and understanding landscapes.

### **Suggested Student Assessment**

Have students apply their geographic detective skills to another landscape. Challenge students to recall the six essential elements of geography and answer the related questions given above to better understand their observations about the land.

### **Extending the Lesson**

Have students use geographic journaling while on a nature walk or field trip. Students should remember to ask and answer geographic questions about the landscape as they experience it.

Have students read stories of the expedition of Simon Fraser or Alexander Mackenzie and prepare a journal describing one of the landscapes they encountered. Students should consider the six essential elements of geography as you interpret the relationship between the pioneers and the land.