

BIG IDEA #3

Place, by definition, is specific and contextual.

It is through close and intimate contact with a particular patch of ground that we learn to respond to the earth...We need to recognize the humble places where this alchemy occurs...Everybody has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches – and the fields, the woods, the ravines – can teach us to care enough.

– Robert Michael Pyle

In an increasingly modernized, materialistic, and homogenized world, the unique and peculiar characteristics of a place are lost because of unsustainable development and human-created infrastructure. As more and more people migrate from rural areas to urban settings, or are displaced due to climate change, how can a sense of place transcend the actual biophysical place?

We can use physical senses such as sight, smell, and sound to engage with the *biophysical* (natural and built) aspect of a place. We can also engage with a place emotionally or spiritually. Certain places with unique biophysical elements immediately evoke an intimate and emotional connection, such as the magnificent vistas of a stormy Pacific Ocean or the beauty of the Sydney Opera House. Places where autobiographical memories are formed, such as a wooded lot or small patch of sand where one played as a child, have specific smells, sights, sounds, and tastes that create deep impressions and attachment.

Socio-cultural aspect of place is where the human practices of each place bonds the individual to the community. Each setting has practices specific to the places, practices that are celebrated only by the inhabitants of the place during specific occasions, such as Fisherman's Day in the Marshall Islands and Cherry Blossom Festival in Kamuela, Hawaii. These practices can form cultural foundations that "roots" one in the place and be a lens from which to view the rest of the world.

Activity: Draw a place or practice that is unique to your community

Reflect again on the activity: Draw a place or practice that is unique to your community.

Use the following questions to guide your reflection.

Essential questions

1. How does knowing the specific and unique features of your place lead to stewardship and care of the place?

Notes

2. How does caring for your place lead to stronger and healthier communities?

Notes

3. How does having a strong community lead to a global sense of responsibility?

Notes

What do you want to know about your students' learning?

Here is space for you to develop **guiding questions** to use with in your teaching. A guiding question is a more specific question that supports inquiry into the essential questions and big idea.

Example: How do we make choices for a healthy future?

Standards

Identify which of your standards apply to this idea about place.

Notes