

# Activity: special places

## Summary of activity

Based around a Native American theme whereby pupils spend time in the outdoors on their own, but with each pupil supported by their own puppet friend. Pupils are supported in using their senses to experience the outdoors and sharing the emotions they feel with others. This activity has a strong literacy focus.

## Learning objectives

1. To identify differences between habitats.
2. To describe our feelings about the outdoors.

## Preparation

- Request that pupils come in to school well prepared to spend time in the outdoors.
- Identify a suitable off-site location for pupils to use as a comparison site.
- Learn the Great Rock Story (see below).
- Pupils will need to examine pictures of Native Americans and create a Native American cardboard puppet on a stick prior to this activity.

## Resources

- Scarf.
- Sticks.
- Cardboard.
- Paints/crayons.
- Clipboards, scrap paper and pencils.
- Decorative or special stick to be used as a talking stick.
- Great Rock story (see below).

## Introduction

With pupils sitting in a circle tell from memory the story about a Native American child spending time in the outdoors on his own. NB – Native American stories are not traditionally written down and should be told to an assembled group who sit in a circle so that everyone is equal. Advise pupils they will be going on their own journey in the school grounds and that they will take their puppet friend with them.

Take pupils into the school grounds and play 'How a Native American Walks' to focus pupils on being quiet. A person sits blindfolded next to a tree with a scarf draped over their knee. Pupils form a large circle, or semi-circle, around the tree and their task is to move slowly and silently towards the blindfolded person and



to remove the scarf without the person realising. If the blindfolded person points towards the sound then that pupil is out of the game.

## Main Activity

1. Tell pupils that their Native American friend is going to help them find their own special place in the school grounds.
2. Remind pupils of the story and ask them to search in school grounds for a gift to take to their special place.
3. Demonstrate how to make an Experience Map by creating one together as a group.
4. Experience Maps are blank sheets of paper with a person represented in the centre and a series of symbols around the page, to depict the experience of being outdoors.
5. Give each pupil a clipboard with a sheet of paper on it and a pencil. Pupils are told to sit in silence in their special place and create their Experience Maps.
6. Ideally, pupils should repeat this activity in contrasting location – perhaps in a nearby nature reserve, open space, park or garden.

### Plenary

Arrange pupils in a circle (outdoors if possible) and introduce concept of Talking Sticks. Talking Sticks are a Native American tool to aid debates and discussions. The person in the group holding the stick is able to speak freely without interruption or ridicule.

As the talking stick is passed around the circle, pupils recount their feelings about their Special Places through their puppet, beginning 'Whilst I was in my Special Place I .....'

This statement might be followed by words like felt, saw, imagined, looked, heard, smelled, touched, dreamt or learnt.

### Health and safety consideration

- Refer to your risk assessment for your school grounds.
- Complete a risk assessment if you leave the school grounds. Consider pupil specific risks.
- Consider activity specific risks such as damaging eyes on a stick whilst making puppets, tripping and pupils always being in sight of an adult whilst in their Special Place.

### Great Rock story

Many years ago, there were no stories in the world. Life was not easy for the people, especially during the long winters when the wind blew hard and the snow fell to the ground.

One winter day a boy went hunting. He caught lots of birds and then started to walk home. The boy became tired and sat against a large rock for a rest. Suddenly he heard a deep voice speak.

'I'm going to tell you a story'. The boy looked carefully around but there was no one there.

'Who are you?' said the boy.

The voice came from the rock that he sat against.

'I am Great Rock. I'm going to tell you a story'.

'Then tell it' said the boy.

'You must leave me a small gift first' replied the rock.

The boy left a beautiful feather from one of the birds he had caught. The rock then began a wonderful story about how the earth was created. As the boy listened to the story he began to feel warm and safe, even though he was sitting in snow.

'Thank you Great Rock. I will now go and tell the story to my family'.

The boy hurried home and told his family something wonderful and exciting had happened. As the boy told the story the whole family became warm. Everyone slept very well that night and had good dreams.

The next day the boy returned to the Great Rock. This time the boy left a smooth brown nut.

'Thank you' said Great Rock, who then told the boy another fascinating story.

From that point on the boy regularly took gifts to Great Rock and listened to amazing stories. The boy heard the stories of talking animals and monsters, tales of what things were like when the Earth was new. They were good stories and they taught important lessons. The boy remembered each story and shared them with his family each night when he returned home.  
*(continued overleaf)*



One day, when the winter was ending and the spring about to come, the great stone did not speak when the boy offered his gift of a brightly coloured flower.

'Please tell me another story' requested the boy.

'I have told you all of my stories," said Great Rock. 'Now the stories are yours to keep for the people. You will pass these stories on to your children and other stories will be added to them as years pass. Where there are stories, there will be more stories.'

Thus it was that stories came into this world. To this day, they are told by Native Americans during the winter to warm the people. Whenever a storyteller finishes a tale, the people always give thanks, just as the boy thanked the storytelling rock long ago.

### Follow-up ideas

Use sounds to describe feelings and different places. Pupils can use natural sounds or instruments made from natural materials to illustrate what the two habitats they explored were like.

Pupils create dream catchers or medicine shields. Gather pupils together outside and use a flipchart to record collective thoughts about their Special Places. Pupils then write comparative pieces, contrasting the two locations they visited.

Pupils can write one of the stories they imagined Great Rock told the boy, using the experience of sitting in their Special Place as inspiration.

Pupils can use the talking stick during a circle time held out of doors to discuss their school grounds and what they like and do not like.

Create word banks and use these as a stimulus for writing whilst in their Special Place.

Pupils can use a talking stick for group storytelling where they reflect on the original story and retell it, embellishing it as they choose.



Create a totem pole to decorate your school grounds. Each pupil can make a hollow section from clay which can be threaded over an upright pole.

Make a quiet area somewhere in your school grounds. Create a story-telling chair. Design and build an amphitheatre. Why not build a willow wigwam?

Pupils can use the talking stick and their puppet friends to engage in group storytelling. The teacher could start off a story, perhaps about a Native American pupil who goes out on a journey, and passes the talking stick to the next person in the circle who must then add another sentence to the story, through their puppet. The teacher can record the story for use later on during literacy lessons. See pages below for more ideas about how to link this activity to literacy