

## Suggested Activities for the 'Our Picture of Britain' project

We have created several activities that you might want to use during the 'Our Picture of Britain' project. You can choose one or many projects to complete in the three-week period, and you can also create your own activities.

These suggested activities can be adapted for any age range and can be made as simple or as complex as you wish. You can modify them by adding new ideas or changing some of the instructions. When you are planning your schedule with your partner teacher, make sure that you agree on how you are going to carry out the activity and make sure that you are both clear on any changes.

# Activity A: Local Monuments

A landmark or monument is often the first thing a visitor to a new place might look for. Each town has its own unique landmarks. This activity asks the class to examine and describe a monument in your town.

- Get your class to make a list of as many local monuments as possible. Why are they important? What do they say about your area?
- Pick one of them and arrange for the class to visit that monument. Bring a digital camera and get your students to take photos of the monument. Try to get as many views and angles as possible to show lots of details.
- In class, have the students team up and give each team one of the digital photos to work with. Ask them to write a piece to accompany the photo, telling tourists about the site and explaining some of the details that can be seen in the photograph. Send your digital photos and the tourist pieces by email to your partner class, and arrange for them to send you the same.
- When you receive the work your partner class has sent, look at the photos first without reading the tourist information. What does the monument look like? Why do you think the class has chosen it? What do you think might be special about the monument, and what does your class think it stands for? Now read the tourist information that your partner class has written. Did you guess some of the details?

**Tip:** Get your students to look up more about the history of their chosen monument on the Web. How is this monument advertised to visitors and tourists?

**Curriculum areas:** English, Geography, History

## Activity B: Local Legends

Many towns have stories that are unique to their areas. These are sometimes depicted in art, song, or poetry.

- Can you think of any local legends, tales or stories that involve your town? Pick a story that is unique to where you live. For example, a class in London might focus on the story of Guy Fawkes, while a class in Nottingham might investigate the Robin Hood legend.
- Ask your class to draw or paint pictures that show the story – remember to include lots of detail, because you will be sending them to students who don't necessarily know anything about your local tale.
- Take digital pictures of the students' work and send them to your partner class, along with short written descriptions of the local legend or tale, and arrange for them to send you pictures and written descriptions of their own local story.
- Now compare. How are their stories different from yours? What do they tell you about the areas and how they are different?

**Tip:** If you can't think of any local legends, try looking up some local history Web sites – you'll find plenty of ideas.

**Curriculum areas:** History, Art, English

## Activity C: Sketchbook Scenes

The painters exhibited in Picture of Britain made sketches and paintings of many different landscapes, both rural and urban. What's in your landscape?

- With your class, list as many different words as you can that describe the landscape in your surrounding area. You might come up with words like 'industrial', 'urban', 'grassy', 'hilly', 'flat', 'mountainous', 'coastal', 'lakeside', and others. List as many words as possible.
- Choose one of the list words to focus on. Arrange for your class to visit an area that is like this word. For example, if you chose the word 'grassy', then you could visit a nearby park. Have the class take sketchbooks, pencils, crayons, and other art materials. Ask them to sketch what they see in the landscape.
- Back in class, take digital photographs of their sketches and send them to your partner class, and arrange for them to send you the same.
- Look at the sketches sent by your partner class: how are your areas different? How are they the same?

**Tip:** If you don't have time to arrange a visit to another part of town, get your class to sit somewhere on the school grounds where they can sketch the surrounding neighbourhood.

**Curriculum areas:** Geography, Art

## Activity D: Life in Our Area

As the artists in the Picture of Britain exhibition show, living in different areas of Britain might bring different experiences. What's it like to live in your area?

- Have a class discussion and ask the students to give their impressions of what life is like in your town. What differing impressions do they have? What do they think life in your area might be like for the other people who live in your town? Do they think that it is the same or different to what they have experienced?
- If your class wanted to get someone's impressions of what life is like in your area, what questions would they ask? Write down as many questions as possible. Together, choose what you think are the five most important questions to ask.
- Now arrange to interview different people who live in your town to get their impressions of what it's like to live there. You can do this in various ways: you can arrange for people (local businesspeople, politicians, community workers, etc) to come in and be interviewed by your class. You can have each student interview three people they know (friends, parents, grandparents) who live in your area, and have them report back to the class.
- When you have gathered enough material from interviews, ask the class to work together to write up the impressions they have gathered from what people have said. What is the general consensus? What do people think about living in your area? Send the document to your partner class and arrange for them to do the same.
- What have people said about living in your partner class's region?

**Tip:** If your school has a video camera or an audio recording device, you could consider taping the interview(s).

**Tip:** If you are studying history, then it might be useful to choose a time period (like the 1960s or the World War II years) and interview people you know who lived in your area during that time.

**Curriculum areas:** Citizenship, History

## Activity E: Curators for a Day

The curators of the Picture of Britain exhibition have selected paintings and works of art that depict six different regions of Britain. Your class can curate their own exhibition of items they bring in and works of art they create to represent their area.

- As a class, discuss what kinds of things might represent your area and capture the spirit of the place you live. Make a list of what might be representative of your town or region.
- Now imagine a new museum is opening in your town and your class has been given the assignment of acting as curators for a day. What will the museum be called? What will its mission be?
- Ask your class to bring in objects, memorabilia and other items that represent your region. Choose up to 10 items that you feel capture the spirit of your area the most.
- Then ask your class to create artwork – paintings, sketches, collages, junk sculptures, etc – that shows your region and the special things about it. With all of the students, choose up to 10 of their art works that represent your area.
- Now ask your class to write some text panels, like the ones they might see in a museum, to describe their exhibition. They can create a text panel for each object and work of art, and then together as a class you could write one larger introductory panel explaining the exhibition and why you think these objects and works of art are important in capturing the spirit of your region.
- Set aside a classroom space to display the objects, art work, and text panels.
- Take digital pictures of the class's exhibition and send them to your partner class along with the text panels they have written, and arrange for your partner class to do the same.
- What have your partner class decided to exhibit in their museum? How have they described their objects and works of art? What have you learned about their region from this exhibition?

**Tip:** You can also do this activity by dividing the class into three groups: one group is responsible for bringing in objects, the second group creates the artwork, and the third group writes the text panels.

**Curriculum areas:** Art, English

## Activity F: Sketches of History

Some of the works of art in the Picture of Britain exhibition were created several hundred years ago; others were made very recently. The differences between them show how the same area has changed over the years. What did your own area look like 100 years ago? 500 years ago?

- As a class, think about how your area looks. What are the landmarks? What kinds of buildings are in the city centre? How do the houses look? What about the landscape? What kinds of transportation are there? What do the people wear? Write down all the features you can think of to describe your area.
- Pick an area of your town – for example, the city centre – and work together as a class to make a work of art (drawing, painting, or collage) of how it looks. Use a long piece of paper taped to the wall, or use separate pieces of paper and then attach them together. Make sure that you include all of the features that belong to that area of town.
- Now imagine it is 100 years ago. What would the same area of town look like? What kinds of buildings would exist, and which ones would not have been built yet? What kinds of transportation would people have used, and what kinds of clothes would they wear? Write down all of the features that you can think of to describe how your town would have looked 100 years ago.
- Now, using the same method as before, create a class drawing, painting or collage of how that area of your town might have looked 100 years ago.
- Now imagine it is 500 years ago. What differences might there be? Use the questions above to explore what kinds of features your town would have had 500 years ago. Then make another drawing or collage of the town as you imagine it might have looked at that time.
- Take digital pictures of the class's art work and send them to your partner class along with the lists of features, and arrange for them to do the same.
- What differences and similarities do you see in the drawings your partner class has made? What buildings appear in the present-day depiction of their area but do not appear in the one from 100 years ago? What about the one from 500 years ago?

**Tip:** Check local history Web sites for more information about your town's important buildings, features, landmarks and landscape.

**Tip:** If you are studying particular historical periods with your class, substitute them for the time periods suggested here. For example, instead of 100 and 500 years ago, think about how your area might have looked in Victorian times and in the Middle Ages.

**Curriculum areas:** History, Geography, Art

## Activity G: Our Natural Area

The artists in the Picture of Britain exhibition often included animals in their paintings, as well as depicting plants and trees that were unique to their region. Does your area have any plants or animals that are unique to it?

- As a class, think about what kinds of plants and animals are found in your area. Make some lists: Which ones are the most common? Which are the rarest? Are there any special animals or plants that are used to represent your area, for example on flags, coats of arms, heraldry, sports teams' mascots, or other places?
- Pick a plant or animal that is unique to your area or that is used to represent your area. Why do you think it has been chosen as a symbol of your area? Think about the characteristics of that plant or animal. Do you think that these characteristics are found in the people who live in your area?
- Have the class draw pictures of this plant or animal. In pairs, have the class write short poems or stories about the plant or animal in order to show its characteristics.
- Take digital pictures of the class's art work and send them to your partner class along with the accompanying text, and arrange for them to do the same.
- What kind of animal or plant has your partner class chosen to draw and write about? Do their poems and stories show the characteristics of that plant or animal? Do they show why it is an important symbol of their region?

**Tip:** If you can't think of any plants or animals that are used to represent your area's uniqueness, have your class invent an imaginary one. What kind of plant or animal would it be? What characteristics would it have? How would it represent your area?

**Curriculum areas:** Science, Geography, Art, English

## Create Your Own Activity

If the suggested activities don't suit your needs or if you have an idea for an activity you would like to do that would capture the spirit of your region and would fit in well with your teaching needs, you can create your own. You can make it as simple or as complex as you want, as long as it involves creating or writing something that you can take digital photos of and e-mail to your partner.

When creating your own activity, make sure that you and your partner teacher are agreed on the steps and how long you will spend on it, and what the outcomes will be. It might be useful to create some written instructions that both of you can use during the project, using Tate's suggested activities as a template.

When you are submitting your project to Tate at the end of the three weeks, there will be a space for you to describe the steps you took if you created your own activity.