

Multicultural Concept Construction and Group Inquiry with Elementary Students

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The Importance of a Multicultural Curriculum

How do certain landmarks symbolize a particular place and its culture? The United States of America is easily identified by the Statue of Liberty, France by the Eiffel Tower, Egypt by its Great Sphinx and China by its Great Wall. But what do these landmarks tell us about these places? What are the characteristics of the place and culture that are symbolized by these landmarks? These questions can serve as the framework for a multicultural inquiry into landmarks that help students towards an understanding of the unique histories and accomplishments of many of the societies that are now part of America's cultural landscape.

Advocates of a multicultural curriculum in the public schools argue that including the heritage and cultures of the many cultural and ethnic groups in our society will result in a better educated citizenry with a better understanding of the broader society of the United States (Smith, 1999). To achieve this goal it is important that students investigate ways of living in cultures different from their own. It is also important that they investigate the contributions of different cultures. The investigation of important places and structures that often represent a cultural group's contributions to human history will help to achieve the goal of better cultural understanding (Banks, 2001; Huang, 2002).

First Step: Constructing Concepts

Strategies for Constructing Concepts

<u>Concept Formation</u>	<u>Concept Attainment</u>
1. Students study examples of the concept	1. Teacher names or labels the concept for students
2. Students determine common attributes for concept	2. Students find examples of the concept
3. Students give the concept a name or label	3. Students discuss attributes that are common to each example

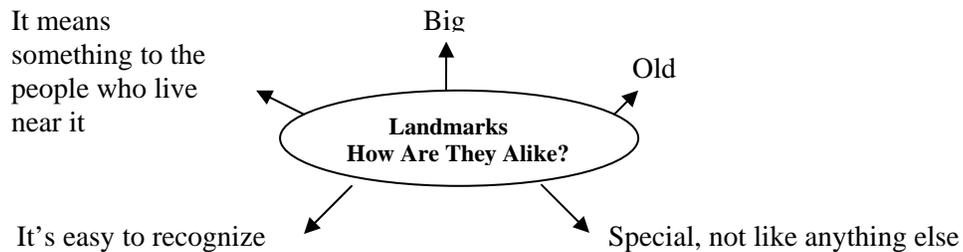
(Parker, 1991; Taba et al, 1971)

Constructing the concept of landmarks with concept attainment:

1. Examples of landmarks:

LANDMARK	Created by Humans	Natural	Local	National	Inter-national
Our Local Courthouse	✓		✓		
Plaque Commemorating Our Town's First Settlers	✓		✓		
The Oldest House in Our Town	✓		✓		
Golden Gate Bridge	✓			✓	
Statue of Liberty	✓			✓	
The Liberty Bell	✓			✓	
The Grand Canyon		✓		✓	
The Great Wall of China	✓				✓
Taj Mahal	✓				✓

2. Schematic web of attributes of landmarks:



3. Differentiating between physical landmarks and landmarks created by humans:

LANDMARKS

CREATED BY HUMANS	NATURAL
Our Local Courthouse	The Grand Canyon
Plaque Commemorating Our Town's First Settlers	Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park
Golden Gate Bridge	The Mississippi River
Statue of Liberty	Niagara Falls
The Great Wall of China	Mt Everest

Constructing the concept of culture with concept attainment:1. Examples of cultures:

Mexican	Chinese
Korean	Columbian
Indian	Pakistani
Nigerian	Guyanese

2. Attributes of Culture:

- Food
- Traditional Clothing
- Holidays
- Language
- Landmarks

Second Step: Group Inquiry:

An inquiry into landmarks is an example of “authentic” research where students construct their own questions about topics that puzzle them and try to find answers (Tompkins, 2002,2004; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Additionally, the idea of a group inquiry, in this instance collaborative group research, is a scaffolding technique to ease students into further research activities. First they conduct research in a group with other classmates before undertaking an individual research project.

1. Selecting International Landmarks to research from Children’s Tradebooks:

Ben’s Dream by Chris Van Allsburg, *Talking Walls* by Margy Burns Knight and *Talking Walls: The Stories Continue* by Margy Burns Knight

The following is a complete list of the landmarks in all three books:

<p><i>Ben’s Dream</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statue of Liberty 2. Big Ben Clock Tower 3. Eiffel Tower 4. Leaning Tower of Pisa 5. Parthenon 6. Great Sphinx 7. St Basil’s Cathedral 8. Taj Mahal 9. Great Wall of China 	<p><i>Talking Walls</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Great Wall of China 2. Aborigine Wall Art 3. Walls of the Lascaux Cave 4. Western Wall in Jerusalem 5. Mahabalipuram, India’s Animal Walls 6. Muslim Walls depicting the pilgrimage to Mecca 7. Granite Walls of Great Zimbabwe 8. Berlin Wall
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10. Mt Rushmore	
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- **Talking Walls: The Stories Continue**
 1. Peace Wall in Moscow, Russia
 2. Friendship Wall in Union, Maine
 3. “Repaired Wall” in Indianapolis, Indiana
 4. The Walled City of Fez, Morocco
 5. Maya Murals in Bonampak, Mexico
 6. Prayer Wheel Walls in Tibet and India
 7. Wat Po Temple in Bangkok, Thailand
 8. Hadrian’s Wall, England
 9. Holocaust Memorial in Kazimierz, Poland
 10. Divali Wall Paintings in India
 11. Ndebele Wall Designs in South Africa
 12. Dog Wall in Shibuya Station, Tokyo, Japan
 13. Peace Lines in Belfast, Northern Ireland
 14. Pablo Neruda’s Fence in Isla Negra, Chile
 15. Dikes in the Netherlands
 16. Chinese Poems at Angel Island, California
 17. Anti-Graffiti Network, Philadelphia

2. Structuring the Research Questions:

- Each group in the class chooses or is assigned one of the landmarks
- The students formulate questions that each group can ask about the landmarks
 - Teacher encourages students to begin with concrete questions such as who, what, where and when
 - Teacher encourages students to move from concrete to abstract questions such as:
 1. How do the landmarks reflect the beliefs and values of a particular place and people?
 2. For what different reasons do people build awe-inspiring structures?
 3. Which landmark do you believe is the most spectacular? Why?
 4. How have characteristics, or features, of landmarks remained the same throughout history? How have they changed?
 5. Discuss landmarks in different parts of the world. How are they alike? How are they different?
 6. The Egyptian pyramids and other structures have withstood the test of time. What modern-day structures do you think will be around in the year 3000?
 7. What do you think is the most important characteristic that a landmark must have? Explain.

3. Using a Data Retrieval Chart to Organize the Research:

See Appendix

4. Completing the Inquiry:

- Assignment of writing tasks to groups to complete
 - Completion of individual chapters on landmarks
 - Completion of the introduction and summary

Use of a process approach to writing including peer review, editing, teacher review, editing (Tompkins, 2002, 2004)

- Additions to the Inquiry

- Illustrations, such as a picture or drawing of each landmark

- Timelines that show the construction of the group of landmarks from the oldest to the most recent or grouping landmarks from different locations into the same time period such as the Renaissance

- World map that gives the location of each landmark

5. Publishing:

- Class Museum

- Class Book

- Power Point presentation or Hyperstudio Presentation

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APPENDIX
LANDMARKS OF THE WORLD
 From *Ben's Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg

LANDMARK	STATUE OF LIBERTY	BIG BEN CLOCK TOWER	EIFFEL TOWER	LEANING TOWER OF PISA	PARTHE-NON	GREAT SPHINX	ST BASIL'S CATHE-DRAL	TAJ MAHAL	GREAT WALL OF CHINA	MT RUSHMORE
WHO BUILT IT?	Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, Gustave Eiffel, Richard Morris Hunt designed it	Sir Charles Barry designed it	Gustave Eiffel designed it	Unknown	Architects were Iktinos and Kallikrates, the head sculptor was Pheidias	Unknown	Barma and Posnik	Specific design credit is uncertain	Unknown	Sculptor was Gutzon Borglum
WHAT IS IT?	151 foot copper statue of a woman, who symbolizes liberty and freedom	Clock tower attached to Westminster New Palace the seat of government for Great Britain	An observation tower for the 1889 Paris Exposition	Bell tower in church complex	A Greek temple	The Sphinx has the head of a king wearing his headdress and the body of a lion.	Russian Byzantine Cathedral	Islamic tomb	Fortification, wall	A carving of the faces of four presidents in granite on the side of Mt Rushmore. The monument is scaled to men who would stand 465 feet tall.
WHERE IS IT?	Liberty Island, New York City Harbor	London, England	Paris, France	Pisa, Italy	On the Acropolis in the center of Athens, Greece	Giza, outside of Cairo, Egypt	Moscow, Russia	Agra, India	China	Rapid City, South Dakota
WHEN WAS IT BUILT?	1884 to 1886	The clock tower was constructed from 1836 to 1868	1887 to 1889	1063 to 1350	Between 447 and 432 B.C.	2600 to 2480 B.C.	1554	1630 to 1653	214 B.C.	1927-1941

<p>WHY WAS IT BUILT?</p>	<p>A gift from France to the US in honor of the first centennial of the United States.</p>	<p>It was first a royal palace, then the Westminster New Palace became the Houses of Parliament for England and all the United Kingdom,</p>	<p>Built for the 1889 International Exhibition, Paris, the centenary celebration of the French Revolution</p>	<p>Bell tower for Roman Catholic Cathedral built in the Romanesque style</p>	<p>Dedicated to Athena Parthenos the patron goddess of Athens</p>	<p>Guards the pyramids</p>	<p>Commissioned by Tsar Ivan the Terrible</p>	<p>Built by Emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumatz Mahal.</p>	<p>A 1400 mile long fortification, running generally east-west along the northern edge of China.</p>	<p>The presidents were selected on the basis of what each symbolized about the United States. George Washington represents the struggle for independence, Thomas Jefferson the idea of government by the people. Abraham Lincoln for his ideas on equality and the permanent union of the states, and Theodore Roosevelt for the 20th century role of the United States in world affairs.</p>
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Aesthetic Perspective:

Possible Questions:

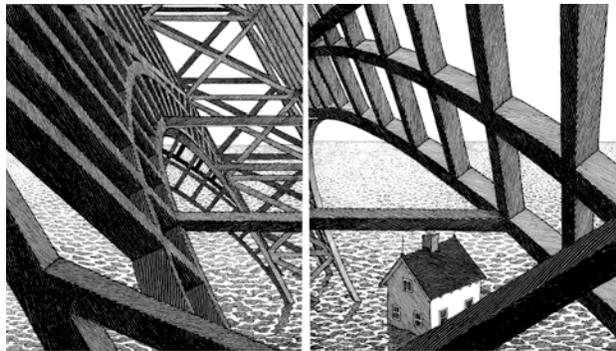
1. What are the building materials and style of each landmark?
2. What are the relationships of these landmarks to the natural environment?
3. Consider the photographer's or artists point of view in creating this image.
Why this perspective?



The Eiffel Tower



The Eiffel Tower from Underneath



(Van Allsburg, 1982, p. 14-15)



The Statue of Liberty



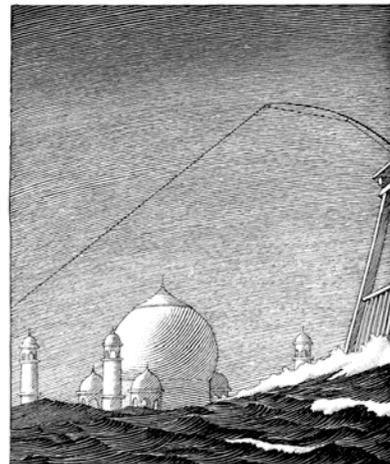
Statue of Liberty from Above



(Van Allsburg, 1982, p. 11)



The Taj Mahal



(Van Allsburg, 1982, p. 24-25)

Geography Applications:

Possible Question:

1. In the book Ben's Dream, in what directions does his house float as he goes to each landmark?
2. What is the distance between each landmark?
3. On what continent is each landmark? Are any of the continents not represented?

