

Unit IV The State of Our Lives: Being a Louisiana Neighbor

Lesson 3 Sense of Place

Lesson Plan adapted from www.louisianavoices.org - Funding provided by the [Louisiana Division of the Arts](#), and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#)

Background Information for the Teacher

Sense of place is a major theme in literature, writing, and social studies. Helping students gain a sense of place in their own community and region deepens their connection to community and opens them to the notion that everyone has a unique sense of place. We all experience a place differently. If any students are new to your community, their sense of place may be strongly associated with another place. Before attending the ballet, "Christmas in Louisiana, Once Upon a Time," choose one or more of the activities from the lesson plan below to allow your students to get to know our community well.

Lesson Objectives/Louisiana Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Foundation Skills

1. Students discover the concept of sense of place and actively explore their own sense of place through observation and fieldwork research.

G-1B-E1 Describing and comparing the physical characteristics of places, including land forms, bodies of water, soils, vegetation, and climate. (1, 3, 4)

G-1B-E4 Defining and differentiating regions by using physical characteristics, such as climate and land forms, and by using human characteristics, such as economic activity and language. (1, 3, 4)

G-1A-M1 Identifying and describing the characteristics, functions, and applications of various types of maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies. (1, 2, 3, 4)

2. Students map a space in their own neighborhood or community.

G-1A-E3 Constructing maps, graphs, charts, and diagrams to describe geographical information and to solve problems. (1, 3, 4)

G-1A-M2 Interpreting and developing maps, globes, graphs, charts, models, and databases to analyze spatial distributions and patterns. (1, 2, 3, 4)

VA-CE-E2 Explore and discuss techniques and technologies for visual expression and communication.

VA-CE-E5 Draw on imagination, individual experience, and group activities to generate ideas for visual expression.

3. Students develop conceptual maps of their own neighborhood or community.

G-1A-M3 Organizing and displaying information about the location of geographic features and places by using mental mapping skills. (1, 2, 3, 4)

VA-CE-M3 Use the elements and principles of design and art vocabulary to visually express and describe individual ideas.

VA-CE-M6 Understand and visually express relationships among visual arts, other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

4. Students study literature about sense of place and write essays and poetry about their own sense of place.

ELA-1-M3 Reading, comprehending, and responding to written, spoken, and visual texts in extended passages. (1, 3, 4)

ELA-1-M4 Interpreting texts with supportive explanations to generate connections to real- life situations and other texts (e.g., business, technical, scientific). (1, 2, 4, 5)

ELA-2-M1 Writing a composition that clearly implies a central idea with supporting details in a logical, sequential order. (1, 4)

ELA-2-M6 Writing as a response to texts and life experiences (e.g., letters, journals, lists). (1, 2, 4)

Technology Connections - Internet Resources

[Creole State Exhibit](#)

[Louisiana Folklife Photo Gallery](#)

[Adaptation Strategies](#)

[Northeast Louisiana's Delta Region](#)

[Louisiana Folklife Bibliography](#)

[Louisiana's Traditional Cultures: An Overview](#), by Maida Owens from *Swapping Stories*

[Native American Organizations in Louisiana](#)

[Atlas: The Louisiana Statewide GIS](#)

[Ernest J. Gaines: Louisiana Stories](#)

[Essays of Place, Montana Heritage Project](#)

[Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana -- The Stories](#)

River of Words

To Prepare

Create or bring in a map of your community that students can copy or trace to use as the base to designate major roads and landmarks. Examine, print out, and bookmark online maps listed in Technology Resources above. Think about how you define the sense of place where you live now and in other places you have lived. What literature has given you a deep sense of place? Think of examples of unique places to share with students. Create a conceptual map of a real place or a literary setting that has been special to you, marking places where events happened where people important to you or local characters lived, gathering places, and so on. Read some of the Louisiana Folklife Articles listed in Internet Resources to heighten your awareness of how sense of place varies from region to region in the state. Print appropriate excerpts and bookmark for students. Review questions about community in the

[Spirit of Place Worksheet](#). Elementary school teachers may want to choose some of the questions or allow students to choose. Review [Unit IV Resources](#) to find useful materials for your students. If using Venn diagrams, [Louisiana Voices Venn Diagram](#) shows how to use them for comparisons.

Procedure

1. Share a story about your own sense of place from childhood or today with students to introduce the concept of sense of place. If you've created a map to illustrate your sense of place, also share that with students. Brainstorm with them the various elements, or cultural perspectives, that contribute to sense of place, including the boxed list below. Students can use the [Cultural Perspectives](#) handout (attached pdf file).

Cultural Perspectives on Place and Event

Language and dialect (What languages or dialects are spoken at the event or in the place?)

Foodways (What events take place in which food or food preparation is important? What are the places where local produce is sold, the local food hang-out, a locally owned restaurant?)

Music and dance (Where do people go to hear music or go dancing? What events in everyday life or special events include music or dance? Think, for example, about lullabies, campfires, playground songs, school fight songs, weddings, birthdays.)

Geography, ecology, and environment (Where is the place located? What is the population? Climate? What are some of the important landforms like rivers, ponds, swamps, springs? What plants and animals are found in the area? What are the important man-made features in the place, such as roads, bridges, dams, canals, reservoirs, malls? How do these affect the plants and animals?)

Landscape and land use (Where are the parks, the playgrounds, the farms, businesses, industries, neighborhoods, and towns?)

Soundscape (What does the place or event sound like? Are they natural sounds or human-made sounds?)

Religions (What religions are practiced? Where are religious activities held? What events are associated with places of worship or religious beliefs? What are the places in the community where religious activity occurs?)

Crafts, decorative arts, and material culture (Fish traps, poles, nets, decoys? Objects related to hunting such as traps, bird calls, blinds? Do you know any woodcarvers or people who are active in textile arts such as crochet, embroidery, knitting, or quilting? Are there any blacksmiths in your area? How are local buildings constructed and decorated: ironwork, brickwork, terra cotta, murals, etc.? How are gravestones decorated in local cemeteries? How are crafts used within events or how do they contribute to a distinctive sense of place? How are they learned and the skills passed on? Are there places where material culture is particularly evident?)

Customs, celebrations, and festivals (What are the major events? Is there a festival, homecoming or reunion, fair, pageant, parade, or procession? What about events associated

with the cycle of life such as birth, coming of age, marriage, death? What are the places where these events traditionally occur?)

Seasonal Round (What events always occur at a particular season of the year? Where do these activities occur?)

Oral narrative genres (Are there jokes, stories, tall tales, legends, riddles, proverbs, folktales, and anecdotes? Are there events or place where you can hear these narratives? Are there narratives about local places or events? What about stories of important events in local history, or how national events affected people in the community?)

Family names and formal and informal place names (How did places in the area get their names?)

Ethnic and other folk groups (Who takes part in the event? Whose place is it?)

Occupations and occupational folklife (What are the work-related skills: the knowledge, customs, traditions, stories, jokes, music, and lore of different jobs or occupations?)

Settlement history and pattern(Who founded or discovered or named the place? Who started the event? Where did some current ethnic groups in town come from? Where did they/do they live? What brought them here? What did/do they do for a living?)

Adapted with permission from FolkWriting, Diane Howard and Laurie Sommers et al., Valdosta State University, 2002, <http://www.valdosta.edu/folkwriting/>.

2. Next, focus on some cultural perspectives from the boxed list above and deepen students' discussion through prompts. Why do these perspectives help define regional culture? How do they define sense of place? Ask students to write a quick list of things in just a few minutes that they think define their own neighborhood or community. As homework, ask students to choose and then observe in detail an area for which they would like to create a sense of place map and essay. Students may work individually or in teams.

3. Discuss soundscape as a perspective, using some of the exercises to heighten **listening skills** in [Unit II](#) to make students more aware of listening. See also [Unit VI](#). Send them on a sound scavenger hunt in their neighborhoods with notebooks or tape recorders. Or, as a class, discuss different parts of your community or region and what they might hear, for example, sounds of nature, language and dialect, traditional music, transportation, and businesses. How do sounds change through the day and night? Through the seasonal round? See [Unit V Lesson 2](#) for activities on regional dialects. Students could share their recordings, asking classmates to guess what part of the community they're overhearing, and edit their tapes into a class community sound collage. If they've written down sounds rather than recording them, ask them to arrange the words on individual, neighborhood, or class poster collages that they decorate with drawings and downloaded images from the [Creole State Exhibit](#) and [Louisiana Folklife Photo Gallery](#).

Technology Option: With students listen to [Swapping Stories](#) and ask them to record people in the community who have regional accents to add to the class sound collage.

4. Ask students to collect formal and informal place names in their community. For example, insiders might know a neighborhood by a special name, or residents may give directions such as, "Turn left at the corner where the cotton gin used to be." Keep a class master list of local place names. Who are streets

named for? Buildings? What are names that cultural insiders pronounce differently from cultural outsiders? For example, residents of Vienna, Louisiana, call their town Veye-in-a. New Orleans residents refer to Burgundy Street as BurGUNDy Street. Students may write a short essay or poem on what local place names say about your community. Or, they could arrange community place names in a pattern on drawing paper, using word processing software, or a Web 2.0 tool such as www.tagxedo.com. Consider using place names to outline the border of a community map on which students collaborate (see Steps 5 and 7 below).

5. How people refer to directions varies regionally. In New Orleans, east, west, north, south are generally not used. People think something is uptown (up river), downtown (down river), front of town (toward the river), back of town or lakeside (away from the river toward Lake Pontchartrain). Along Bayou Lafourche, bayou side is the area between the bayou and the road. The front is the area along the bayou, and back is away from the bayou. In North Louisiana, directions are more specific to place. For example, Bayou DeLoutre is an important cultural divide in Union Parish. People either live on this side or the other and locally that's referred to as "cross Loutre," as in "they're from across Bayou DeLoutre." Ask students to consider what directions are specific to their community and add examples to their maps or to the class Community Story Map in Step 8.

6. Have students draw or trace the outline map of a neighborhood or community and designate major roads, landscape features, and landmarks. Next, they should add "personality features" to the map, such as places associated with local events or characters, distinctive neighborhoods, formal and informal boundaries, various kinds of gathering places, important landmarks. Older students will be able to fill in more details than younger ones. Find information on websites such as those listed in Technology Connections above.

7. Ask students first to read and then complete the [Spirit of Place Worksheet](#). As a class discuss questions you and students have never thought about before. They should use responses to write an essay or poem on their sense of place. With elementary students, you may want to choose some questions for them or have them choose some.

8. As a culminating activity, create a large, collaborative Community Story Map by combining students' individual neighborhood maps, by working as a class on a big map or use a drawing program. Ask students to think about this sentence: "Sense of place is a story happening many times." Not only do many stories help create a sense of place, many different people's stories overlap and layer sense of place. Students' research and fieldwork throughout this unit will have yielded a lot of information about the personality of neighborhoods, formal and informal place names, geography, ecology, landscape, landmarks, boundaries, and people students have collected stories about. Ask students to consider the questions below in conceptualizing and creating their class Community Story Map.

A. What interesting stories have emerged from your neighborhood or community? Where did these stories occur?

B. What are some places that insiders know by informal names, for example, "four corners," "this side of the bayou," "where the cotton gin used to be"

C. What are the "invisible" boundaries of your neighborhood or community? How do you know when you've left one neighborhood and entered another?

D. Where have historical events occurred? Where have famous, infamous, interesting, or talented people lived? Where did any local legends take place?

E. Where do varying socio-economic, religious, or ethnic groups live?

F. What kinds of places border your neighborhood or community? How do residents, landscape, religion, and occupations differ from where you live?

Work with students to decide how to illustrate and design this Community Story Map. Invite other classes and parents to view the map and have student docents describe the process of creating the map and the stories the map tells.

Have students complete the [Things I've Learned Worksheet](#), then share responses with others in small groups (form attached in pdf file).

9. A community or neighborhood walking tour is another good culminating activity. Students may design a brochure with their photos, text, and a map indicating special places and landmarks. They might also create an audio recording that takes the listener on a walking tour of a neighborhood, including sounds, interviews, traditional music, and student voice-overs.

10. See articles on Louisiana's [Regional and Cultural Groups](#). If you want students to use these resources and they are written above their reading level, use [Adaptation Strategies](#) to build lessons around them.

Culminating Activity 1: Open a Louisiana Window

adapted from www.louisiana101.com

1. Individually or in pairs, have students fold an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper into nine rectangles (1/3 folds both horizontally and vertically).
2. In each rectangle, students should write or draw what they saw or heard after attending the ballet, "Christmas in Louisiana, Once Upon a Time." They may remember hearing a particular song, seeing Jean Lafitte on the mural, the Sallier Oak, a particular costume, etc. They should write or draw nine things.
3. To extend this activity, you can also ask students to write a complete sentence on the back explaining each window.
4. Have students present their windows to another student or pair of students.

Culminating Activity 2: ART ACTIVITY: IBERVILLE STONE

adapted from www.louisianabicentennial2012.com/page.php?page=Education-Resouces

Encourage students to commemorate the bicentennial of Louisiana's statehood by exploring interesting Louisiana locations and discovering what makes Louisiana unique. Ask students to make their own Iberville Stone marker for one of their favorite Lake Charles locations.

1. Use photographs from the websites below to reinforce the themes of the ballet (families who first settled here, timber, lumberjacks, pirates, Jean Lafitte, Ryan St.) while discovering important landmarks in this area.
2. Show images to the students and have them brainstorm some of their favorite Lake Charles locations such as Millennium Park, Historic City Hall, McNeese's football stadium, etc.

Websites with photographs:

- http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/cdm4/index_PSL.php?CISOROOT=/PSL from McNeese State University Archives
- Go to <http://www.visitlakecharles.org/media/video-photo-tour/>
 - Click on "Click HERE to request an image."
 - Select a gallery to view images.

Materials

Two cups of warm water, three cups of flour, bowl, large spoon, newspapers, flat box for form (students will shape their stone in this box), pencil

Directions

Spread newspaper on the work surface. Mix all ingredients and stir until smooth. Paste should be thick and smooth, but easy to stir. Add more flour or water as needed for the proper consistency. Pour the paste into the form, shaping it into a flat "stone." While the mixture is still wet, use a pencil to "carve" the stone. Carve either the name or initials of your group members as well as the name of the location and the date the stone was made.

Culminating Activity 3: Crossword Puzzle (see attached)

E-Resources

- *Education Guide & Resources*. Louisiana Bicentennial Commission, n.d. Web. 12 July 2012. <<http://www.louisianabicentennial2012.com/page.php?page=Education-Resouces>>. "A Little Bit about Louisiana101." Greg English, n.d. Web. 12 July 2012. <<http://www.louisiana101.com/>>.
- *Encyclopedia of Louisiana History, Culture and Community - KnowLA*. Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, n.d. Web. 12 July 2012. <<http://knowla.org/index.php>>.
- "A Little Bit about Louisiana101." Greg English, n.d. Web. 12 July 2012. <<http://www.louisiana101.com/>>.
- *LOUISiana Digital Library*. Web. 12 July 2012. <http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/cdm4/index_PSL.php?CISOROOT=/PSL>. Searchable

database of images from the McNeese Archives collections depicting McNeese and Southwest Louisiana

- *Louisiana Voices*. Louisiana Folklife Program, n.d. Web. 12 July 2012.
<http://www.louisianavoices.org/edu_get_start.html>. Funding provided by the [Louisiana Division of the Arts](#), and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#)