

Who do we think we are? – ‘geography explained’ fact sheet



	Key questions and ideas	Key facts
Lesson 1: Who am I?	<p>Exploring the elements that make up someone’s identity</p> <p>Understanding how personal geographies become part of our identities</p> <p>Investigating the relationship between people and their environment – particularly their local environment.</p> <p>Considering how identity is particular to the individual and exploring similarities and differences between people.</p>	<p>Understanding identity is not just a case of knowing where we come from, it’s a combination of a huge range of factors that come together to make an individual. Asking the question ‘Who am I?’ will, on a basic level, produce relatively simple answers connected to, for example, gender, race and religion. However, by digger deeper, people start to think about their identity as being far more multifaceted and complex, with connections to where they were born, their ancestry, education, wealth, health, income, and the place where they live. Dr Nick Barratt, a genealogical consultant, states that “being able to ask questions about who we are and where we fit into the modern world is an important part of developing our identity.” (Read Dr Barratt's article here.) Therefore, it is important for students to ask the questions ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Who do we think we are?’ in relation to their world around them.</p> <p>As part of the new Key Stage 3 Curriculum changes, cultural understanding and diversity now forms one of the key concepts. Under the explanatory notes, it is suggested that students consider how people and places are represented in different ways. Through asking questions such as ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where do I come from?’ students can further develop their understanding of diversity and social cohesion. (Link to National Curriculum Geography.) Exploring an individual’s identity and their place within their personal geography (the world around them in which they interact) has become an important aspect of human geography in the Key Stage 3 classroom. It also provides the perfect opportunity for cross curricular links, particularly with Citizenship. In this lesson, students are encouraged to start to develop an understanding of their own identities, and also to recognise the similarities and differences that exist between them and the identities of others.</p>

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<p>Lesson 2: What is Britishness?</p>	<p>Exploring the meaning of the term ‘Britishness’.</p> <p>Considering what ‘Britishness’ means to us as individuals, and whether it means different things to different people.</p> <p>Highlighting the difficulties in defining ‘Britishness’ and thinking about how and why the terms mean different things to different people.</p> <p>Deciding whether ‘Britishness’ can be summed up in a single word.</p>	<p>‘Britishness’ has emerged as a hot topic over the last couple of years, with questions such as ‘What is Britishness?’ and ‘What does it mean to be British?’ frequently debated in the media. Although defined on Wikipedia as “a term referring to a sense of national identity of the British people and common culture of the United Kingdom” (link to Wikipedia definition) there is no single definition, and it is often a question which raises a plethora of responses from a variety of different people. Even politicians cannot agree on what Britishness is; a point highlighted when the global financial services provider Morgan Stanley organized a debate on the subject. During the debate, Jim Knight, Minister of State for Schools and Learners was asked whether Britishness should be taught in schools. He replied, “I’m not sure whether exclusively there are characteristics you can define as British, but I think there are important values to promote.” He went onto say, “Be proud of your country but define Britishness for yourself.” (This quote is taken from the BBC News article ‘Can Pupils learn Britishness?’ October 2008. Read article here.)</p> <p>In June 2008, 500 schools across the country were involved in the first ‘Who do we think we are?’ week of events and activities to explore identity, diversity and citizenship. This educational programme was set up following the Curriculum Review of Diversity and Citizenship undertaken by Sir Keith Ajegbo, who recommended that the event be held, to involve “investigations and celebrations by schools of pupils’ histories and their community’s roots and of the national and global links that they can make”. (Quote taken from the ‘Who do we think we are?’ website.) One of the four main themes of the project is ‘Britishness, national identity/values and the 2012 games’. The government is keen for students to have the opportunity to explore their roots and heritage in relation to the country in which they live, and to try to construct a definition of what Britishness means to them as individuals. However, the debate remains as to whether Britishness can or should be taught in schools.</p> <p>Commissioned by the Daily Telegraph in 2005, a YouGov poll found that 51% of people who took part thought Britishness should be taught in schools as part of the national curriculum with 56% believing it would increase the feeling of national identity. (View summary of poll results.) With the absence of an agreed definition for Britishness, there remains some uncertainty as to how the topic should be tackled. However, when learning boundaries are extended and students have a constructive, but not restrictive space in which to learn, they are able to consider complex questions such as ‘What is Britishness?’ and start to form their own interpretations of the concept based on their geographical imaginations and personal experience.</p>
<p>Lesson 3: What do landscapes mean to me?</p>	<p>Considering the meanings that rural and urban landscapes have for people.</p> <p>Identifying and explaining our favourite landscapes.</p>	<p>This lesson investigates the association between people and landscapes, considering how people value landscapes and give them meaning. Identification with particular landscapes indicates a connection with the world around us. Landscapes make up part of our personal geography and, it can be argued, help us to understand our identity. In her article in Teaching Geography (January 2005) Vimmi Vatis comments that “Place is intimately entwined with identity...” and that the value we attribute to landscapes results from the connection and meaning they have for an individual. It has become recognised that “certain landscapes are associated with certain groups of people” and that “this</p>

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	<p>Investigating whether different people from different places identify with different landscapes, and to explain these findings.</p>	<p>contributes to national identity” (RGS Exploring the Archives learning resource), further reinforcing the argument that landscapes have meaning.</p> <p>In her article “Place: an exploration” (Teaching Geography spring 2005), Liz Taylor cites Relph and his work on the meaning people find in places. Relph suggested that people make connections between the characteristics of the physical world and the activities that take place there, using this to construct a meaning or “sense” of place. Relph’s ‘sense of place’ can be used to refer to the connection that people may feel with a place, “a profound association with places as cornerstones of existence and individual identity”.</p> <p>Exploring landscape meaning and its association with identity can first be tackled through asking students to identify their favourite landscapes. Using their geographical imaginations and personal experiences, students are able to question what it is about their favourite landscapes that makes them special, and what particular meaning they have attributed to these landscapes. From here, investigations can begin into why different people identify with different landscapes.</p>
<p>Lesson 4: Am I a global citizen?</p>	<p>Discussing the characteristics that a global citizen should have.</p> <p>Considering whether we can describe ourselves as ‘global citizens’.</p> <p>Discussing whether, or why, it is important to be a global citizen.</p> <p>Developing an Action Plan to assist groups of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo.</p>	<p>Being a global citizen is essential to life in the 21st century. The Education for Global Citizenship guide for schools published by Oxfam states that “today, more than ever before, the global is part of our everyday local lives”. In addition, the fact that we now live in what is termed a ‘Global Village’ means that students are not only aware of global events but they are also aware that what happens across the globe affects them too. The Oxfam guide argues that “Global Citizenship gives [students] the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that they need if they are to participate fully in ensuring their own and others’, well-being and to make a positive contribution, both locally and globally”. Click here to read to full Oxfam Guide.</p> <p>Assumptions of citizenship are changing and today students are not only encouraged to be aware of the world around them, but to also take an active part in that world. In their article “What is geography’s contribution to making citizens?” published in the journal <i>Geography</i> in Spring 2008, Cook et al. suggest that “what we do ‘here’ has enormous consequences for collective life at a global scale”. They also stress the importance of “feeling empathy towards geographically and socially distant ‘others’”. Global disasters can be used as a vehicle to explore global citizenship and to encourage students to ask both whether they consider themselves to be global citizens, and whether it is important to be a global citizen.</p> <p>Following increasing disputes between the government and tribal groups over mineral deposits and land (although the exact cause is still unclear), fighting once again broke out in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo in August 2008, following the five year ‘Africa’s world war’ which ended in 2003. Internal migration has occurred on a huge scale and there are an estimated 250 000 people who are now living as refugees. Many refugees have fled to Goma, close to the Rwandan border, but</p>

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		<p>now face new fears in refugee camps which are overcrowded, lack basic facilities and are unsafe. Continuous fighting is making it virtually impossible for aid agencies to get supplies into the area and specifically into the camps, and there are growing concerns from the UN that people are starting to die from malnutrition. There have also been reports of women being kidnapped when they leave the camps in search of wood for fuel. The situation is now being referred to as a humanitarian disaster with increasing pressure on the UN to have more involvement. People around the world can not avoid the images of this mass scale human suffering, which exemplifies the importance of being a Global citizen. (Read BBC News article on the conflict.)</p>
<p>Lessons 5 and 6: Come into my world</p>	<p>Exploring symbols of identity. Considering our place in the world.</p>	<p>Awareness of our place in the world helps us to establish a clear identity for ourselves and an appreciation of who we are. Equally importantly, it encourages us to be curious, and subsequently develop an understanding and tolerance of people from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds – including identifying ways that they are both similar to and different from us. Our worlds expand in scale from the personal and local to the international and global. Each one of us sees importance in different people, places and connections between and within these scales, and we put value and meaning into our personal geographies.</p> <p>Our worlds are made up of a number of different elements, each one personal to the individual. These elements, whether they relate to where we were born, our religion, ethnicity, social class, education, dress, music or hobbies, make up who we are and how we perceive ourselves. How these elements come together form part of our identity.</p> <p>Welcoming people into ‘my world’ shows a depth of understanding about who we are, as well as an acceptance that everybody else inhabits and experiences different worlds that are important to them. Our identity is at the very centre of our individual worlds, and understanding of this connects us to the personal, local, national, international and global worlds in which we live. It makes us both local and global citizens.</p>