



# Linking localities

## *Teaching and learning about contrasting parts of Ireland*

The local area is well-regarded as a cornerstone for successful geography teaching and learning. Pupils' localities are part of their everyday lives.

As pupils learn about their own locality, they are curious to compare and contrast how people live in other parts of the world and indeed, other parts of Ireland. Here, we look at learning activities that can be used in teaching senior primary classes about their local areas and contrasting parts of Ireland.

### Selecting a Contrasting Locality to Study

When selecting a contrasting locality to study, it is best considering the pupils' own local area and to focus on that word 'contrast'. Factors such as the natural environment and landscape, sports and recreation, transport and travel, tourism, jobs and other key features of the pupils' local area should be considered when selecting a contrasting locality to investigate.

Another important factor to consider is your own connections to a contrasting locality. Many teachers are from other parts of Ireland than where they currently live and work. Pupils are interested to learn about these places, what they are like and how they are different and indeed similar to their own local area. Furthermore, being originally from these locations, teachers have a keen sense of place and content knowledge to inform and guide the investigations.

### Lesson 1: Where is this place? Generating ideas and enquiry questions

The unit begins with some atlas work via a '21 Questions' game. Here the pupils work in pairs observing the map of the counties of Ireland and using geographical language to ask

their teacher questions (e.g. 'Is it a county in Ulster?'; 'Is it a coastal county?'; 'Is it south of Carlow?') (see **Figure 1**). Once the correct county is identified, the pupils will focus on the specific contrasting local area within that.

Next the teacher should present the pupils with 10-20 images of various aspects of the contrasting locality (see **Figure 2**). These images should include aspects of life in the contrasting locality including:

- Houses and homes (bungalows, apartments, semi-detached etc.).
- Features of the local natural environment (river, beach, forest, mountain, bog).
- Main places of work (factories, farms, shops and other businesses).



Figure 1: pupils engaging in a '21 Questions' game based on geographical language and map-reading skills.

Figure 2: Sample images of contrasting locality for the pupils to analyse and categorise.







Figure 3: Sample screenshot of Google Earth satellite view of Oldcastle, Co. Meath.

Figure 4: Example of a primary class interviewing a guest speaker over Zoom.



- Sports and recreational facilities (local clubs and societies, sports pitches, parks, walks, hikes, trails).
- Transport and travel (cycle lanes, greenways, rail links, bus stops and lanes, major roads).
- Local schools and so on.

In groups, the children should investigate and observe the pictures, hypothesising and questioning in relation to whether the place is rural/urban, and what living in this place might be like. The pupils should categorise and group the 10-20 pictures into 'similarities' and 'differences' with regard to their own local area. Teachers should facilitate a discussion on these categories and challenge pupils to justify their reasoning.

The pupils should use atlases and Google Earth to identify and discuss the location of the contrasting locality (using cardinal and geographical descriptive language) and the size of this contrasting locality compared to their own local area. Comparisons should be made throughout this map reading activity, discussing the location (inland, along a canal, near a county border etc.). Here the 'zoom' and 'Streetview' function of Google Earth could be used to identify key natural features (e.g. mountains, rivers, lakes, coast, bogs, forests) and built features (e.g. factories, industry, housing, sports pitches, schools, roads, golf/pitch and putt courses, etc.) of the contrasting locality (see **Figure 3**).

Finally, the pupils should generate some enquiry questions about what they would like to learn about this contrasting locality based on what they have already learned. These questions should be recorded on a flipchart or word document to be referred to throughout the project and for reflecting on as part of self-assessment at the end of the project.

### Lessons 2 and 3: Using resources and making sense

Using some of the enquiry questions from Lesson 1 as a guide, in groups, the pupils

should investigate aspects of life in the contrasting locality under the following areas:

- Sports and recreation.
- Places of work/jobs.
- Community groups and organisations.
- Transport and travel.
- Tourism.

For example, the transport and travel group would explore Google Streetview and maps of the contrasting locality to identify roads, cycle lanes, bus lanes/stops, railway, etc.

It is important to note that teachers should prepare resource packs for each of these aspects of the contrasting locality. These would include various images and information for the pupils to collate and present on a poster (e.g. the resource pack for Transport and Travel would include various images of the transport modes available in the contrasting locality as well as information on where this place is connected to and how people use these transport modes).

Information and pictures could be collated on chart paper for peer-learning whereby groups will report their new learning to the rest of the class.

Connecting with people from the contrasting locality is a powerful way of learning about other places. If the teacher has connections to people from that contrasting locality, they could arrange a video call (via Zoom or Skype) between the guest speaker and the class. The guest speaker could tell the pupils more about life in the contrasting locality (see **Figure 4**). The pupils would be afforded the opportunity to ask pre-prepared questions and interview the guest speaker.

Note-taking and wider discussions should take place following such an interview to reinforce the learning. Additionally, there are huge opportunities to connect the pupils in the class with pupils in a corresponding class in a school in the contrasting locality via pen-pals and/or video call. Such opportunities

have obvious curriculum integration benefits with literacy and SPHE.

### Lesson 4: Presenting findings

The pupils could present their findings on what they learned about the contrasting locality via a poster/PowerPoint/video/tourism brochure etc. These findings should focus on 'Sense of Space' (the location and size of the contrasting locality) and 'Sense of Place' (the unique character of the contrasting locality, what there is to do, how to get there/get around). This should include information they attained from their interview and pen-pal letters along with their investigations on specific aspects of the contrasting locality (e.g. sports and recreation).

In pairs/groups, the pupils should make a Venn diagram display on similarities and differences between their local area and the contrasting locality (see **Figure 5**).

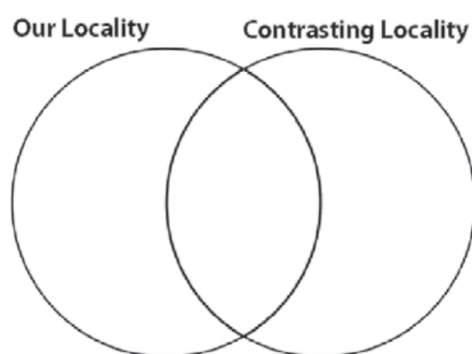


Figure 5: Venn Diagram Template for communicating similarities and differences.

Finally, the class should review the original enquiry questions from Lesson 1 and identify what they have learned, questions they have answered, and questions they still need to investigate.

**JOE USHER**, Dublin City University, and **ANNE DOLAN**, Mary Immaculate College, are lecturers in Primary Geography education. Email [Joe.Usher@DCU.ie](mailto:Joe.Usher@DCU.ie) / [Anne.Dolan@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Anne.Dolan@mic.ul.ie) or contact via Twitter: [@Geoseph\\_Usher](https://twitter.com/Geoseph_Usher) / [@DolanGalway](https://twitter.com/DolanGalway).