



Lesson 2: Buildings, Streets and Public Spaces

In this lesson, students explore their route to school, observing building types, street layouts and public spaces along the way.

Support material: Information Sheet 16 “Streets and Squares”, Worksheet B2.



Spotlight

My route to school



Key Concepts

Routes. Landmarks. Public spaces.

Review of work

Assess Memory Drawings. Make a random selection for class discussion.

- What types of buildings did students draw from memory?
- To which categories did the buildings belong?
- Which buildings are “ordinary” and which are “special”? Why?
- Were there any details which you didn’t remember when making your Memory Drawings?

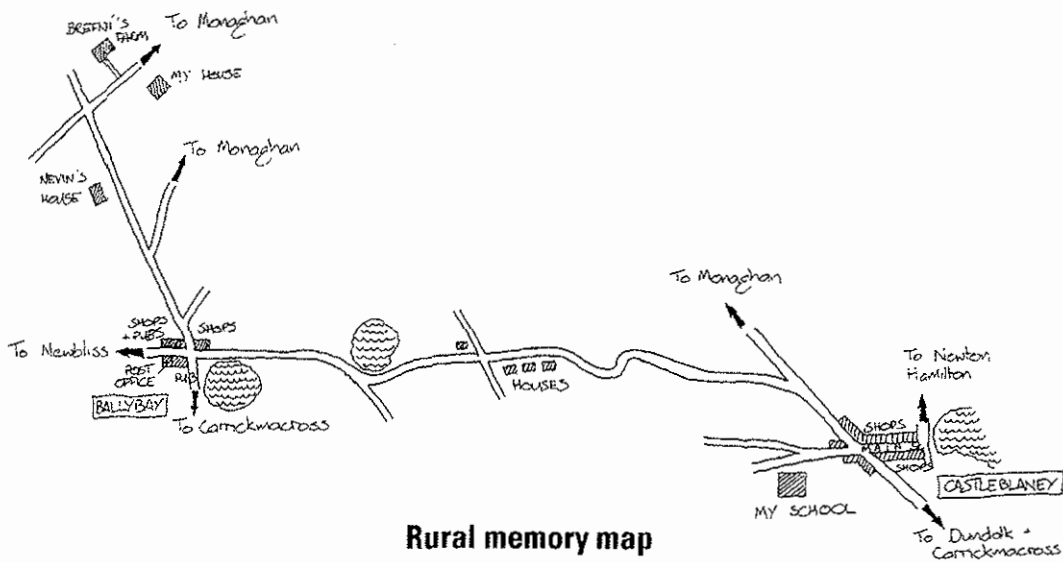


Activity 1 — Memory Map

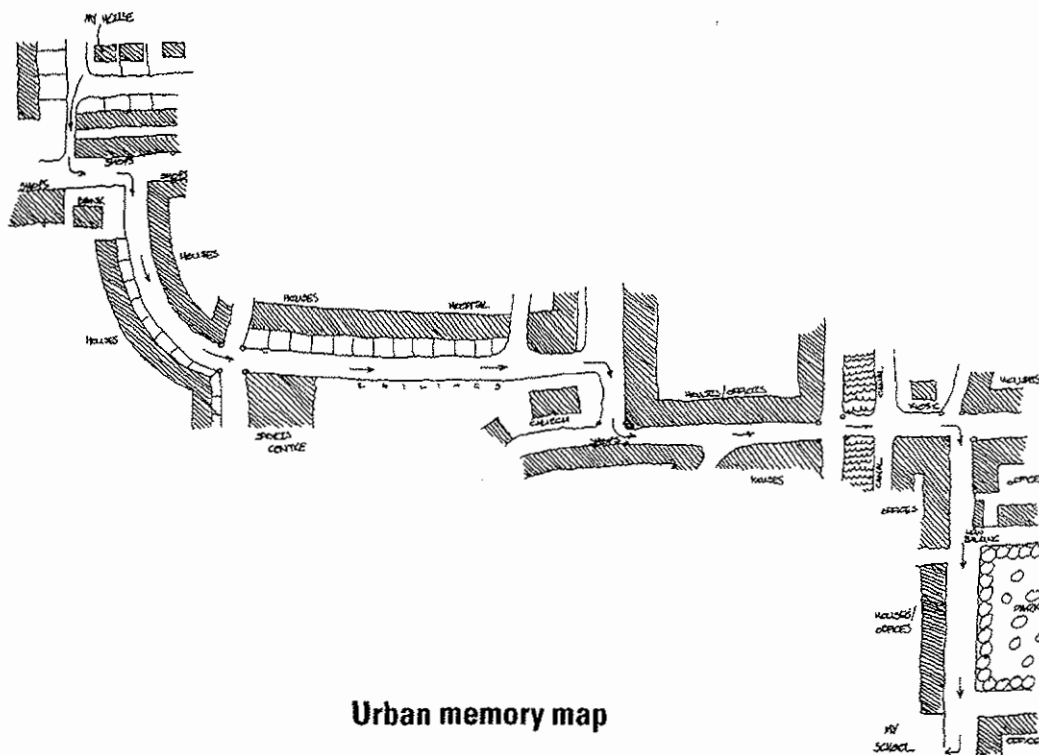
1. The teacher presents a prepared map of his/her own route to school which the class examines and discusses. What route do students take to school? Ask two volunteers to *describe in their own words* the route they take to school.
2. Each student then draws a free-hand sketch map of their own route to school. The maps will not be to scale and need not show every building along the way. Suggest that they draw it lightly with a pencil at first until they have included as much information as possible.

Note: Where students may be travelling long distances through a heavily built-up area the teacher may choose to limit the extent of the map drawing exercise to the area covered by a circle of 2.5 km radius centred on the school. Students would start their maps only at the point where they enter this circle.

3. The maps should attempt to show:
 - the student’s own home .
 - the turns, twists and changes in direction that the route takes.
 - important roads/lanes/paths, including any that branch off or cross the route.
 - any street names they remember.
 - the school grounds and building(s).



Rural memory map



Urban memory map

4. The maps should also indicate the kinds of buildings along the route and name them — shops, cinema, houses etc. Students could colour code the buildings — Residential = blue; Commercial = yellow; Industrial = brown; Institutional = red; Recreational = green; Transport = grey.
5. Are there any “special” buildings on the route? Students could number them on the maps and then name them in a separate list.



Discussion 1 — Public Spaces



Key Concepts

Public and private places. Streets, squares and other spaces. Hard landscape/soft landscape.

Cities, towns and villages are made up of buildings and, just as importantly, the spaces between the buildings — streets, squares, parks, ponds, parking lots, forecourts, gardens, yards...

What is a **public place**? Agree a definition with the students, based on questions such as these.

- Is a public place a place in the open air?
- Is it a place which belongs to the local authority or the government?
- Is it a place which anybody can visit?
- Is it a place where you can be seen by anybody passing by?
- Is it a place you do not have to pay to get into?
- Is it a place which nobody can tell you to leave?

Which of the following do the students consider to be public places? Why? List them on the classroom board and discuss

street	cinema	town square
front garden	beach	sports ground
church	shopping centre	hotel
park	library	
playground	field	

Is there a category somewhere between completely public and completely private? Semi-private? What does this mean?

Discussion 2 — Streets and Squares

Distribute Information Sheet 16 “Streets and Squares”.

The most public places in any town are usually its **streets** and **squares**. A “square” does not have to be square in shape — it may be rectangular, circular, triangular or irregular. It has fairly clear boundaries, so we know where it begins and ends, but does not have to have buildings on all sides. One side may be a road, a park, a row of trees, a river or the sea. Streets also have a “shape”. A street may be long or short, wide or narrow, straight, curved or winding.

The character or feel of a street or a square is affected by its shape, as well as by other factors.

- A big square feels different from a small square.



- A street or square lined by tall buildings feels different from one lined by low buildings.
- A street or square lined by closely-packed buildings feels different from one where the buildings have plenty of space between them.
- A street or square where all of the materials are brick, stone, concrete, iron and steel (**hard landscape**) feels different from one where there are a lot of trees, grass, shrubs and flowers (**soft landscape**).
- A quiet street or square feels different from a busy one.



Activity 2 — Discuss. Write. Draw.

1. Are there any squares in your community? Ask students to describe them, using words or drawings. Think about the characteristics discussed above.
2. Are there streets in your town which have a very different feel to them. Ask students to choose two and list the things which make the difference.

Teacher preparation for Lesson 3

Ask students to bring in Junior Cert material on maps and map reading for use in Lesson 3 — for example *New Complete Geography*, Gill & Macmillan.

Homework

1. Ask students to take a good look at their routes on the way home. They should correct their memory maps and add any details they have omitted.
2. Students should complete Activity 2 if they were unable to do so in class.
3. Distribute copies of Worksheet B2 and discuss it with the students. As the worksheet asks them to discover a number of facts about their community, negotiate a reasonable deadline which will allow them to collect the information and fill in the worksheet. Students may need to consult various people and sources — library, council or corporation offices, parents, grandparents.
4. Remind students to check the **Scrapbook** requirements on Worksheet B2 and to update their **Vocabulary Files**.

Cross-Curricular Connections

1. Art/Geography — Find some examples of famous public squares in the world's great cities — London, Paris, Rome, Venice (The travel section in your local library is a good place to find useful maps). How many shapes can you find? Draw a small plan of each square you choose. Record its name and the city in which it is found. Show the buildings in solid black and the streets and squares in white (a figure/ground drawing.).
2. Art/Geography — Using an Ordnance Survey map, trace a figure/ground map (See Information Sheet 18) of your own community or of another town which interests you. See what shapes and patterns emerge. Find out what significance they might have for



NEIGHBOURHOOD, VILLAGE, TOWN, CITY

the town — historic, aesthetic, social . . .

3. Media Studies — Make a video about a public space or a sequence of public spaces. Plan carefully what you want your video to explain. Select people, places and objects to make your point.
4. Horticulture/Design — Survey the green/open spaces in your own community. What new plantings would you like to see? Prepare a landscape proposal. For help with your drawing, refer to “Information Sheet 3 — Landscape and Services Symbols”.
5. English — Write a word-picture, an essay or a poem, about a public space which interests you.
6. Biology/Environmental Studies — Open spaces in a town can provide habitats for wildlife. Linking these spaces together into ‘ecological networks’ can improve opportunities for flora and fauna. Are there examples of such networks in your community? How could they be improved? Consider barriers such as dual-carriageways, densely built-up areas, etc.