

# URBAN SPACES: ART & DESIGN



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*These materials contain ideas for field work in urban spaces and public gardens. The materials were originally developed for primary schools in central London as part of the Gordon & Woburn Squares primary project, but can be used in most urban parks and gardens.*

This section relates to our first and third key questions:

- What is your area like now, and how is it used?
- What might it be like in the future, and how might it be used?

The suggested activities in this section address many elements of the National Curriculum for Art and Design. They are flexible, so most are suitable for both key stage 1 and key stage 2 children. You can select from the ideas presented, and decide the right level of depth and complexity for the children in your class.

## Your area now: architecture and design

(QCA Art and Design unit 5d: investigating art, craft and design in the locality and in a variety of genres, styles and traditions)

### **Resources:**

- Classic street furniture: pictures (download from [www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org))
- Digital cameras, clipboards, pencils, etc.

Take an observational walk around the area and public garden if any (this could possibly be combined with the history time walk). Discuss any interesting design and architectural features, for example:

- house facades (doors, knobs, knockers, fanlights)
- the architectural style of the houses
- benches
- street lights
- street ornaments
- playground equipment
- carvings on buildings
- the architectural style of special buildings such as a church, temple or mosque
- street furniture such as telephone boxes and post boxes
- historic items such as boot scrapers or coal covers. (Look down as well as up in the course of your walk.)

## Questions to discuss

- Q What kind of design is it? – functional, aesthetic, religious, commemorative, or a combination of these?
- Q What is it made from?
- Q What is its colour, texture, shape?
- Q What is/was it for?
- Q How is/was it used? (If old, is it still used?)
- Q Is/was it fit for its function?
- Q What need does/did it meet?
- Q Could it be improved?
- Q How do I feel about it?

*Cross-curricular link: close observation and discussion of Green Man carvings are included in the English/literacy section of 'Urban spaces'.*

## Recording

Divide the children into supervised groups. Each group could choose a feature (or set of features, such as carvings on a building) to record. Alternatively, the whole class could do the same activity, such as taking photographs of objects in a public garden. Children could record using:

- Observational drawings
- Digital cameras.

## Back in the classroom

Lay out the children's pictures across several tables. If they've used digital cameras, print the photographs and spread them out.

Discuss with the class how you might use the record they have created. For example:

- Drawings of architectural features could be assembled into a pattern for wallpaper or textile making
- Photographs of houses could be models for a frieze
- Drawings or photographs of street ornaments might be starting points for the children's own sculptures or designs
- Create a design or architectural guide to the area using ICT.

## Practical artwork related to the area

The recordings made in the area, and the discussions back in the classroom, provide an excellent starting point for a range of practical artwork. Other elements in 'Urban spaces' (stories, suggestions for old photographs, Green Man images, time walk) broaden the number of starting points for the children to build on.

On the next page are some suggestions for practical artwork.

## **Design coal hole covers or plaques, perhaps using the Green Man as a motif**

If you decide on the Green Man motif, and the children have already drawn their own interpretations of him (see English/literacy section of this pack), they can use the drawings as a starting point for their designs.

**Q** What material would be best to use? Iron or another metal? Would any non-metal be suitable?

Is a round shape ideal, or would another be just as good?

Will a symmetrical or non-symmetrical design look best?

What colour should it be?

## **At KS2, construct props and a set for a play about the Green Man – see literacy section**

**Q** What size is your performance space?

If not in the school grounds, which props and pieces of set are absolutely essential?

What materials are light and easily movable? – they couldn't be left in a public area.

How many pieces are needed?

What skills do we need to construct/make the props and set?

## **Design a new object/piece of street or garden furniture for the area**

This could be for a public garden or for the pavement outside.

**Q** What would make the area better than it is now? For instance, do you think more bins or seats are needed?

Is there anything that might make the area more welcoming for particular groups, such as pensioners, children, disabled people?

Would your local park or garden look better with a statue or sundial? or another one, if it's already got one? What might it be?

You could submit the children's designs to your local council as ideas for future development.

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## **KS1 Your urban space, now and then**

### **Resources:**

- Magazines or newspapers with current pictures of traffic, people, etc. The children's digital photos/observational drawings are another source.
- Classic street furniture: pictures (download from [www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org))

The class could create *Now and Then* collages of your area, showing it as it is now and as it might have been about 100 years ago.

This is best done after the other literacy, history and art activities in the 'Urban spaces' series, so that the children can draw on the knowledge they have built up through their time walk, the story of Frances (see 'Upstairs downstairs'), any old pictures, and the pollution debate.

## Your area now

Walk with the children to the area again. Choose one set of buildings to observe closely. Stand on the pavement on the other side of the road, looking across at the buildings, with the street in the foreground – this will be the perspective for the collage.

Ask the children to note everything they can see. Then discuss which of these they think would not have existed 100 years ago (e.g. modern cars, scooters, motor bikes, wires, electric lighting, lines on road, phone box, pedestrian crossing, people in 21st century clothing).

Then ask the children to consider what has stayed the same. For instance, some of the trees and other plants in a public garden, maybe the road layout, and some of the buildings.

## Back in the classroom

Display and examine historical photographs of Edwardian parks See the English Heritage website <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/> . To get there choose Learning & resources -> Photo collections -> Viewfinder then search on Children, Gardens and parks (select this) and your local area. You may need to broaden the area to find something interesting.

Recall and discuss the pollution debate and the time walk. With the class, make a list of what they might have seen in the street 100 years ago (e.g. hackney cabs and other horse-drawn vehicles, early motor cars, hawkers' carts, gas lighting, horse manure, people in Victorian clothing, maids scrubbing steps, red pillar boxes).

Discuss with the class which materials would be most suitable to use to construct two collages of the area – one showing now, the other showing the same scene about 100 years ago.

The children are now ready to construct their collages.

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## KS2 People in public gardens

**Resources:** Clipboards, paper, drawing materials  
Activities record sheet (download from [www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org))

### *The area in the past – how was it used?*

You can find historical photographs of children in public parks and gardens on the English Heritage website, though probably not your particular one. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/> To get there choose Learning & resources -> Photo collections -> Viewfinder . Then search on Children, Gardens and parks (select this) and your local area. You may need to broaden the area to find something interesting.

Alternatively try your local public library. They should have a collection of historical photographs.

### ***The area now – how is it being used?***

Visit a nearby public garden, park or open space with the children. Walk around the area, noting design features such as paths, benches, may be a playground, ice cream kiosk, fountain or statue. How are they being used? What are people in the area doing?

If you are using the record sheet (an opportunity for links with Numeracy and Geography), divide the class into groups. Place each group so it has a clear view of the people in the garden. The children are now ready to make tallies of all the activity in the area on their recording sheets. This should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes.

Now ask the children to select an area of the garden with at least two people in it. They should try to choose a scene that illustrates people using the garden (sitting, walking, buying, eating, playing, chatting). Tell the children to sketch their scene in outline only. The purpose is for each child to return to the classroom with the basis for a painting.

### **Back in the classroom**

***How people use the open space*** If you have used the recording sheets, use them as the stimulus for a class discussion about how the design of the park, garden or open space influences how it is are used. This discussion can be linked with work in Geography and Numeracy.

Total the children's tallies, then pool and compare them. It would be useful to make bar graphs of the data the children have collected.

**Q** Do any groups of people use the area more than others?  
Which parts of the area are used by the most people?  
What do most people do when they are in the area?  
Are any parts of the area not being used at all?

### ***Painting people in urban spaces***

Examine artists' pictures of people in urban spaces, for example: Renoir's impressionist *Les Parapluies* (the umbrellas) and Seurat's pointillist *La Grande Jatte* (showing Sunday afternoon in a city park) . An internet search using Google Images will find these.

Discuss with the children the style and approach of the artists. How have they used and organised colour, pattern, line, tone, shape, form and space in their paintings?

Now you and the children are ready to decide on the style to use for the paintings of people in your local public garden.

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## **KS2 Design a garden**

How would the children have designed your local public park or garden?

Children could measure the area, or a section of it, make a scale outline, and then draw up their own garden design plan. The garden could have a

particular theme of their own choice. They would need to mark the position of large trees, shrubs, and buildings which can't be moved.

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## **Health & Safety**

Follow your school or local authority guidelines about taking children out of school. Carry out a risk assessment before allowing children into different areas of the park, gardens, urban space, or before touching anything in the area. See the Science section of 'Urban spaces' for more detailed notes – download from [www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org).

### **Nuffield Primary History: Urban spaces cross-curricular project**

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