

SOSE:

“What’s in a name?”

Level 04

Lesson Description

If the student’s local area had no place names, what could the features, landmarks and structures be called?

Because student’s personal experience of place varies so much across Australia, they are asked to draw a simple plan of a prescribed area (the information is supplied in the lesson’s work sheet). Then they are asked to name all of the important places on the “map”.

Suggestions are given as to where names can be drawn from – they may not be attached without a supporting rationale.

If the size of the class recommends implementation of this lesson in groups, or the character of the students suggests that it would be most effective as an individual exercise, then names given should be presented to and explained to the whole class. The whole class can then vote on the names that are thought to be most fitting, allowing for a new version of the map to be drawn-up in which the most popular/best supported names are used.

For this reason the lesson proposes that the same mapping area be examined whether this is adopted as a whole-of-class, group, or individual exercise.

Lesson Aim and Objectives

Because of the need to justify each name chosen, students will be obliged to think about the nature of naming things and, in seeking out appropriate candidates, to consider, find and research candidates from several possible sources as detailed on the work sheet.

Materials Needed

The work sheet and basic drawing materials for mapping.

NOTE:

The work sheet suggests streets immediately bounding the school and since there is no need, in this lesson, to map accurately with dimensions and complete detail, there is no reason why this exercise should require offsite activity. If, however, circumstances suggest otherwise then the project could be restricted to school grounds, in which case every building, pathway, even every tree could be nominated for naming, depending on the size and complexity of campus.

VARIATIONS

The challenge for older age groups can be intensified by both restricting the source of names and increasing the depth of required research.

For example, students may be required to replace all of the existing place names with names from Indigenous languages. Using library and internet research or contacting the **Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages** (www.fatsil.org) they will have to select names (words) that can be justified rather than simply listing what Aboriginal words they can find.

They may, therefore, succeed in the task by finding suitable words to describe particular features (hill, crossing, big tree). The objective should be to replace as many names as possible – replacing all of them in a relevant way would be an unreasonable expectation.

Or students could be instructed to follow the pattern used in many urban subdivisions and name all of the features on a theme – football players, opera singers, First (or Second) World War Battlefields at which Australians fought, prime ministers and so on.

If the locality has a reputation of a particular kind – for what it produces, for its chief employer or form of employment, for a particular “famous son or daughter” that could be proposed as the basis for renaming.

Of course if the students, in completing the exercise, feel that the research they have conducted and the names they have discovered should be meaningfully applied to “their place” then the **CGNA website** will tell them how to go about making their case!