

Teaching guide: Changing places

An integral part of the Changing places topic is the study of two places, one local and one contrasting. This resource has been designed to provide you with additional support in selecting the location of both place studies and to signpost qualitative and quantitative data that students might engage with as part of the place studies.

Specification guidelines

Local place study: exploring the developing character of a place local to the home or study centre.

Contrasting place study: exploring the developing character of a contrasting and distant place.

Place studies must apply the knowledge acquired through engagement with prescribed specification content and thereby further enhance understanding of the way students' own lives and those of others are affected by continuity and change in the nature of places. Sources must include qualitative and quantitative data to represent places in the past and present.

Both place studies must focus equally on:

- people's lived experience of the place in the past and at present

and either

- changing demographic and cultural characteristics

or

- economic change and social inequalities.

The choice in the focus of the study outlined above should be the same for both the local and distant place study chosen.

What we mean by 'local place'

This place study should focus on an area that is 'local' to the students' home or school. By local we mean a place that is familiar to the students; a place with which they will have some personal experience. This is likely to be in close proximity to the students' home and/or school location but this will depend on the context of each school. In most cases, this place will be within a few miles of the school.

Examples of exceptions

There are occasions where this would not necessarily be suitable.

A boarding school in a rural area

It may be more appropriate to choose a place in the nearest town/city as students may be more familiar with this location, rather than the immediate vicinity of the school. Similarly, teachers from a school in the suburbs of a city might select a place in the city centre, as opposed to where the school is situated.

This would be suitable as it is likely that students will have personal experience of the city centre location.

A school in the suburbs of a city

It's appropriate to select a place in the city's centre, instead of around where the school is situated. For example, a school based in Hove may select a local place study area in Brighton, such as the North Laine ward. It is also important to consider the range of qualitative and quantitative data sources available when selecting a local place study.

What's not acceptable

Although not all students will have the same level of familiarity with the chosen 'local' place, the idea of students having some experience of the area is important. For this reason, a field study centre location would not be suitable for the local place study (unless it is located in close proximity to the school).

The reason for this approach is not to limit schools, but to allow for the study of the students' sense of place to focus around the place familiar to most students. Selecting a location for study that is not 'local' to students will impact on their ability to draw personal connections and relationships that develop their sense of place.

What we mean by 'contrasting place'

The contrasting place should be 'distant' to the local place in terms of character and it should be a location with which students are unfamiliar. It may also be geographically distant, eg being located in a different country to the local place study or an unfamiliar part of the UK (or home country). However, it is equally acceptable for the contrasting place to be located near to the local place as long as it provides the necessary contrast.

The contrasting place must show significant contrast to the local place in terms of each or all of the following:

- economic development
- population density

- cultural background
- systems of political and economic organisation.

For example, it would be acceptable for a school located in Tower Hamlets to choose a place such as Richmond upon Thames for its contrasting place study. These two locations are relatively close geographically but distant in terms of character and provide significant enough contrast.

How large an area a place study should cover

The size of area you choose for your place studies will depend on context but the following criteria provide a guide:

- choose a place that you could envisage walking around on a one-day fieldtrip
- as a rough guide, look for a place with a population of approximately 10,000 – 20,000, although it could be smaller than this
- large towns and cities are too big so if you are choosing an urban area, you would need to focus on a particular ward or area.

Choosing your local place

- Choose a local place which is familiar to as many students as possible. This could be a village, small town, community or ward/area of a city. It can be either urban or rural.
- Choose a place with a good supply of data – type the name of your place into a search engine and look at the quantity and quality of sources that comes up.
- Students can collect primary data to use as part of their study, this time could contribute to their two days of fieldwork (AS) or four days of fieldwork (A-level).
- Ideally, your place should have undergone or be undergoing change – this could be socio-economic (economic decline or regeneration, new housing estate, industrial estate or out-of-town shopping centre) or demographic/cultural (in or out migration, globalisation).
- Many urban areas have experienced significant socio-economic change over the last few decades, for example, (former) industrial areas or areas subject to regeneration or gentrification. In rural areas you might look at places which have experienced counter-urbanisation, de-population or contested landscapes (new housing estates, second homes, infrastructure projects such as HS2). Seaside resorts offer the opportunity to look at issues such as decline and regeneration or conflict caused by second home ownership.

Choosing your distant place

- Before choosing your distant place study, it is worth looking at the availability of data and the different sources of information available. For places abroad, charities and non-governmental organisations are useful sources of information as are government websites and international or global institutions such as the World Bank.
- A fieldtrip to your distant place would certainly enhance the place experience for the students so practical fieldtrip considerations such as distance and cost might be considered; this time could contribute to their two days of fieldwork (AS) or four days of fieldwork (A-level).
- Alternatively, you could make a twinning arrangement with a school in a contrasting place and swap material.

Research and presentation ideas

1. Location and locale

Maps are an important tool for any investigation of place. They can show the location of a place in relation to others and depending on the type of map chosen, can also display physical and human features of the local area.

- Start with an Ordnance Survey map 1:25,000 scale. Ask the students to look at the physical geography of the area: relief, height of the land, aspect, drainage. How have humans impacted the area? What are the main land uses? You could see how the area has changed by looking at older OS maps. Look for changes in the size of the place, types of land use and infrastructure.
- For an urban area, find a ward map and clearly define the area your students will be focusing on. You could ask the students to map land use within this area.
- Literary sources such as books, atlases and newspapers can be used alongside maps to provide historical information about places. Students could produce a potted history of your local place.

2. Demographic characteristics

Local area census data is a good starting point for finding key demographic information. The [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and its website is a useful starting block for finding out about the social and economic characteristics of your local and distant place.

The website offers free access to a summary of neighbourhood and small area data. This covers the census, deprivation, health, local economy, education, housing and crime. It allows you to analyse and compare selected areas using

maps and charts; pick and mix data from different datasets to compare different areas and view or download whole datasets.

The [Consumer Data Research Centre](#) provides geospatial data from the 2011 census. Type in the postcode for the area you want to investigate in more detail.

The Local Government Association provides up-to-date published data about geographic areas and [LG Inform Plus](#) can be used to generate reports on places at a census ward level.

At an even smaller scale, [Street check](#) enables you to check how residents of a postcode have been profiled, and what their behaviours might be like.

- What is the current population of each place?
- Students could find or construct a population pyramid to show the age structure of the place. How does this compare to the regional/national average? Discuss reasons for this.
- Is there much ethnic diversity within the chosen place? Discuss reasons for this.

3. Economic characteristics

To build up an economic profile of the local and distant place, students could research the following:

- levels of employment and unemployment
- the balance between different economic sectors: primary, secondary, tertiary
- Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) estimates
- house prices (property websites and the Land Registry)
- access to services for different economic groups (go to [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#)).

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a UK government qualitative study measuring deprivation at small area level across England. It can be used to show economic inequality between and within different places. The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 are based on 37 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation which are combined, using appropriate weights. The seven different dimensions of deprivation are:

- income
- employment
- health deprivation and disability
- education skills and training
- crime

- barriers to housing and services
- the living environment.

Note that these statistics are a measure of relative deprivation, not affluence. Not every person in a highly deprived area will themselves be deprived. Likewise, there will be some deprived people living in the least deprived areas.

The IMD data for 2015 has been mapped and is available on the [Consumer Data Research Centre](#) website. Students could consider what IMD data reveals about your local (and distant) place and the reasons for this.

4. Social characteristics and inequalities

The social aspects of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) can be looked at in greater detail or you can find other relevant data such as:

- local educational data such as [school performance](#)
- [crime data](#)
- health-related data and wider determinants of health including social and economic indicators can be found on the [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) website. This website enables you to map data and compare different areas.
- health data such as life expectancy can be downloaded from the ONS website or local public health reports
- [health profiles](#) are useful but may not cover the specific geographical area you are focusing on.

5. Representations of your local and distant place

Particular weight must be given in your place study to the use of qualitative sources. These will vary significantly depending on the place you are investigating but may include art, novels, poetry, nature writing and travel writing. It may be more difficult to find representations of place from qualitative sources but below are some ideas.

Artistic representations

- photographs
- postcards
- paintings
- marketing literature

Media representations

YouTube or the [British Pathé](#) film library archive are useful sites for TV/film.

Musical representations

- folk songs
- raps
- popular music
- parodies.

6. Sources detailing the (lived) experience of a place

Lived experience of place can come from a range of sources but this is where interviews and surveys carried out by the students themselves will prove useful and informative.

- Ask students to devise and conduct their own questionnaires.
- Students could also carry out more in-depth surveys with local people such as family members, councillors, entrepreneurs etc.
- Ask students to research social media sources such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Trip Advisor which can provide (lived) experience of place.
- Some local authorities carry out resident satisfaction surveys that could be analysed.

Blogs can be an excellent source of information about an area. In East London for example, The Gentle Author writes a daily blog ([Spitalfields Life](#)) about the culture of the Spitalfields area and documents the lives of local people and places.

7. Sources for investigating economic and social change

Statistics, maps, newspapers, film sources, photographs, poems and paintings are just some of the sources which can be used to show change in a place over time.

- Compile a library of photographs for both the local and contrasting place (if possible) which can be added to and compared year after year.
- Research local newspapers and websites to find details of change over time including future planning proposals.
- Ask the students to look for evidence of change using the above, for example historical sources such as maps and photos can be compared to current day ones. Flickr is a photo-sharing platform which could be used to find visual images for your local and distant place. Google Earth is a source of geotagged photographs.

Checklist

Data source	Examples
Statistics	Census data, employment data

Maps	Ordnance Survey, Google Maps, ArcGIS
Geo-located data	Interactive transport app
Geospatial data	Index of Multiple Deprivation, Public Health determinants of health
Photographs	Photographs showing change over time
Text, from varied media	Poetry, novels, social media sources including blogs
Audio-visual media	Film archives
Artistic representations	Paintings, sculpture
Oral sources	Interviews, reminiscences, songs

Example of a local place study: Tormohun ward, Torquay

The seaside town of Torquay in South Devon has a population of approximately 65,000 people and is therefore too large to be used as a single place study. Instead, one of the geographical wards of Torquay, Tormohun, was chosen. Tormohun has a population of just under 12,000 people and includes the main tourist areas along the seafront as well as large residential and commercial areas. It enjoys some amazing scenery being by the seaside, but it also houses some of the most deprived people in the UK. The seafront area of Tormohun has undergone considerable change in the last two decades as the local authority has adopted strategies to regenerate tourism within the area.

For this place study, the students could use data from the ONS, IMD and local authority statistics as well as data from the local health authority and English Riviera tourism. It is also possible to find a range of media and artistic representations of Torquay although little specifically on Tormohun.

Students could spend an afternoon conducting questionnaires including questions about perceptions of Torquay and lived and visitor experience of place. They could also take photographs (which could be compared with previous images) and record evidence of decline and regeneration.

Example of a distant place study: Spitalfields and Brick Lane, East London

This area contrasts significantly with Torquay for a number of reasons but most notably because it has a much younger population and is more ethnically

diverse. This area of East London is also interesting because it is undergoing social and economic change as a result of gentrification and redevelopment. There is plentiful quantitative data for most of the London boroughs and wards and this particular part of London has a rich cultural history with place representation in the form of art, poetry, novels and film. The students could visit this area and carrying out fieldwork including questionnaires and land use mapping. They could also take photographs and notes focusing on street art and gentrification.

Fieldwork in and around this area can also be used to investigate parts of the Contemporary urban environments topic.