



URBAN WORLD ACTIVITY  
MY LOCAL AREA  
OVER TIME



Jane Goodall's  
Roots & Shoots



# MY LOCAL AREA OVER TIME

This activity will encourage students to investigate their local area further by asking local older people who have lived in the area for some time about how the local environment has changed over the years.

## In this activity you and your students will:

- ▶ Write a questionnaire.
- ▶ Write to, call or visit local older people.
- ▶ Produce a 'local area over time' map.

## Objectives

To develop contacts and build relationships with local older people and to discover what your local area used to be like and how it has changed through a person's lifetime.

## What do I need to make it work?

For this activity, you'll need:

- ▶ Contacts with local older people, either local friends of students' families or a local care home or sheltered housing.
- ▶ Pens and a note pad, dictaphone or audio recording app.
- ▶ Device for digitising old photographs (a smartphone camera will do).
- ▶ Paper, acetate or transparency paper.

## What things will my students create?

- ▶ A letter and/or a questionnaire.
- ▶ A local time map or local area history display.

## What and who?

In this part of the activity you'll be thinking about what information about your local area you'd like to find out about and who you will ask.

### Get talking

Start by discussing what parts of your local area might change over time and which of those parts would affect a person's daily life.

### You could think about some of the following areas:

- ▶ Transportation.
- ▶ Housing.
- ▶ Green areas vs urban development.
- ▶ Local facilities like playground, shops and libraries.
- ▶ Social demographic of people living in the area.

It would be a great idea for your students to talk about what each of these areas are like now and how you use or interact with them in your current daily lives so that you can compare it to the past.

Try writing a few sentences about each topic and perhaps going out and about around the area to investigate and take some photos.

You may also be able to find archive photos of your area online to help you compare and also aid the memory of the older people you'll be talking to. These will also come in handy for any display you make for your project. The old image below came from the Arabian Gulf Digital Archive, which contains hundreds of old photos and documents about the Arabian Gulf.



*Abu Dhabi, 1960*



*Abu Dhabi, 1974*

You can use this link to view photographs of Abu Dhabi streets in the past: [bit.ly/3gc8sbl](https://bit.ly/3gc8sbl)

*Optional: You may want to do the first part of the mapping activity (details below) at this point.*

## Write a questionnaire

As you think about each part of your local area, write down some questions for each topic that a local older person could help answer with memories and photos from their past. For example, how have the shops on the local high street changed? What was there before the supermarket was built? Has the local park changed?

## Who can you ask?

Once you know what local subjects you'd like to ask about, now you need to know who you will ask.

Do you have any local older family friends or relatives?

Does your school or group have a local care home or sheltered accommodation that you can ask to visit or set up a phone/Skype/Zoom/WhatsApp call with?

As part of extending your activity your group could investigate befriending a local older person through the *together we are good* program from MAAN: [www.togetherwearegood.ae/en](http://www.togetherwearegood.ae/en) – along with their knowledge of the past, they might have other skills or knowledge you can tap into to help you with future projects and it would be a great chance to support those in your local community!

## Visit, call or write to a local older person

With your description and photos of today, arrange to visit, call or write to someone who can help you imagine your local area in the past.

If your students have connections to local older friends and family members, you could set this up as something to do on their own and report back.

If you have or can start a connection with a local care home or sheltered residents housing, this might be easier to do in groups together.

It could be really nice for the person you are considering asking questions to, to try to contact them in a variety of ways.

- ▶ You could start by phoning or video calling them to talk generally about your project and what you'd like to find out.
- ▶ You could then write to them and include a copy of your questionnaire along with things you've found out about your local area today. This would then give them time to think about the questions and maybe find some photos!
- ▶ Finally you could arrange a video call or (if possible) go and meet them in person to hear what they have to say (and maybe have a drink and a biscuit too). At this point you may want to take a notepad and pen, or some way of recording your conversation to make a record of their answers. Make sure you ask permission before recording anything! NB. See note below.
- ▶ Later on you might want to send them another letter to tell them about the rest of your project, and to thank them for their involvement.

# Make your local area time map or display

Now that we've got lots of information about the past and present, what do we do with it? Let's make a map or a display!

## Make a local area history map

- ▶ Print off a current map of your local area from Google Maps to paper the same size as the acetate or transparency paper you have. Use this as your base map for today. Using transparency paper your students can highlight details of the topic you discussed at the beginning of the project.
- ▶ Using the descriptions you've gathered from the local people create further layers on a transparency paper to highlight the information about the topics they talk about.



## Make a display

If you'd like a simpler option, you can make a display of your findings.

- ▶ Divide the display you have into the time periods you have investigated.
- ▶ Write a blurb for each time period about what stood out as being different.
- ▶ You could use any photographs, maps or drawings you've collected, to illustrate each section.
- ▶ It might be nice, alongside the information about your area you present, to also show your meeting with local people and a bit of information about them (with their permission).

## Don't forget!

... to write to the local people you've been writing to and talking with to show them your work and thank them for their involvement. You might also want to think about what other activities you could involve them in.

*Please note during the Coronavirus epidemic that students will need to observe the strict social distancing measures, in particular, with the elderly and vulnerable, so visiting in person will need to be put on hold until the lockdown restrictions are lifted.*

## Let us know how you get on

This resource was provided by Roots & Shoots UAE, a not for profit charity run by the Jane Goodall Institute (UK). One of the aims of Roots & Shoots is to inspire young people to care for people, animals and the environment.

One way we help inspire people is by hosting stories about our members' activities on our website at [uae.rootsandshoots.community](http://uae.rootsandshoots.community) so we would love it if you could provide a write up on the website about how you get on with this activity to share with the world. If your group is not a member already then you'll be able to find details on how to sign up on the site.

## Keep up to date with Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots in the UAE



You can find us on Facebook at [fb.com/RootsnShoots.ae](https://fb.com/RootsnShoots.ae) and on Twitter (@JaneGoodallUAE, direct link: [bit.ly/jgi-uae-twitter](https://bit.ly/jgi-uae-twitter)) and you can always drop us a line on [MrH@uae.rootsandshoots.community](mailto:MrH@uae.rootsandshoots.community)

## Want to help improve this activity?

This activity is a living document! Please help us by editing this activity to make it as good as possible. You can edit it by using this short link (just type it into your web browser's address bar): [bit.ly/2XrGLDs](https://bit.ly/2XrGLDs) - full instructions are provided. Any edits that can make this resource easier to use in the classroom or more applicable to life in the UAE are very welcome, so please follow the link and make your contribution!