If These Walls Could Talk: Seeing a Culture Through Human Features

From a wonderful book about famous walls, children learn about countries and their cultures.

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Mimi Norton</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>2-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>2-3 class periods</td>
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### National Geography Standards

**ELEMENT TWO; PLACES AND REGIONS**

4. The physical and human characteristics of places

### Arizona Social Studies Standard

**Grade 2**

**Strand 4 Geography**

**Concept 2 Places and Regions**

- PO 1 Identify through images of content studied (e.g., Japan, China, United States) how places have distinct characteristics.
- PO 2 Discuss human features (e.g., cities, parks, railroad tracks, hospital, shops, schools) in the world.

**Concept 4 Human Systems**

- PO 4 Discuss cultural elements (e.g., food, clothing housing, sports, customs, beliefs) of a community of areas studied.

**Grade 3**

**Strand 4 Geography**

**Concept 2 Places and Regions**

- PO 1 Locate major physical and human features from content studied (e.g., Greece, Canada, Spain, France, United States) on maps and globes.
- PO 2 Describe how physical and human characteristics of places change from past to present.

### Arizona Language Arts Standards

#### READING STANDARD

**Grade 2**

**Strand 1 Reading Process**

**Concept 6 Comprehension Strategies**

- PO 4 Relate information and events in a reading selection to life experiences and life experiences to the text.

**Strand 2 Comprehending Literary Text**

**Concept 1 Elements of Literature**

- PO 1 Describe literary elements of text including characters, plot (specific events, problem and solution), and setting.
- PO 5 Identify words that the author selects in a literary selection to create a graphic visual experience.

**Concept 2 Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature**

- PO 1 Compare events, characters and conflicts in literary selections from a variety of cultures to their experiences.

**Strand 3 Comprehending Informational Text**

**Concept 1 Expository Text**

- PO 2 Locate facts in response to questions about expository text.
- PO 5 Locate specific information from graphic features (e.g., charts, maps, diagrams, illustrations, tables, timelines) of expository text.

**Grade 3**

**Strand 1 Reading Process**

**Concept 6 Comprehension Strategies**

- PO 2 Compare a prediction about an action or event to what actually occurred within a text.
- PO 5 Extract information from graphic organizers (e.g., webs, Venn diagrams, flow charts) to comprehend text.

**Strand 2 Comprehending Literary Text**

**Concept 2 Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature**

- PO 1 Compare events, characters and conflicts in literary selections from a variety of cultures to their experiences.

#### WRITING STANDARD

**Grade 2**

**Strand 1 Writing Process**

**Concept 1 Prewriting**

- PO 1 Generate ideas through prewriting activities (e.g., brainstorming, webbing, drawing, writer's notebook, group discussion).

**Concept 2 Drafting**

- PO 1 Write a draft with supporting details.
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concept 4 Human Systems</th>
<th>PO 4 Discuss the cultural elements of a community or nation (e.g., food, clothing, housing, sports, customs, beliefs) in areas studied.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 6 Geographic Applications</td>
<td>PO 1 Discuss geographic concepts related to current events.</td>
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<td>PO 2 Organize details into a logical sequence.</td>
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**Overview**

There are many ways to introduce young students to culture. Some are obvious; some are not. Teaching students the importance of human features regarding a culture gives them an opportunity to see the factors that shaped it. Walls that stand for years can be a reflection of these cultures, their histories, values, and meaning to a group of people.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students to think of all of the events that shape a culture and to create an awareness of some of the human features in their own community.

**Materials**

- *Talking Walls* by Margy Burns Knight
- Writing paper and pencils
- Clipboard for each student (or slate or other hard writing surface)
- Student copies of a world map
- Colored dots or stars
- Transparency or wall map of the world

**Objectives**

The student will be able to:

- Locate the country or continent where each wall in the story is located.
- Discuss the events that surround the history of each wall.
- Make a list of possible events that could have happened in view of a wall in the community.
- Write a paragraph about a particular wall chosen by the student while on a class walk.
Procedures

SESSION ONE:
1. Introduce students to the book, Talking Walls.

2. Ask the following questions:
   - Can walls really talk?
   - What do you think the title means?
   - What is on the wall on the cover of the book?
   - How do you think the pictures got there?
   - What art materials do you think the artists used?
   - Do you think the wall on the cover was created recently or a long time ago?
   - What do you think the children are talking about?

3. Read Talking Walls. (Note: Due to the book’s length, teacher may choose to read portions of the book instead of the whole book in one sitting.)

4. Discuss the importance of each wall in the book to its culture.

5. Show students the locations of each wall on a world map.

6. Distribute a copy of a world map to each student.

7. Using the world map, assist students in placing a sticky dot or star on each country (or continent) mentioned in the book. (See Assessment Checklist)

SESSION TWO:
1. Review Talking Walls and discuss the importance of the walls to the cultures.

2. Ask students if they think there are any important walls in their city or neighborhood.

3. Take students on a walk to look at the walls around school.

4. In an urban setting, take a short walk around the block, pointing out walls around shopping malls, parks, restaurants, garbage containers, and backyard fences (if time permits). (Check on if you need parent permission to do this off campus activity.)

5. If there are no commercial buildings near the school, use the various enclosures, fences, or walls at the school. Stop at each wall and discuss what things the students have seen happen around the wall. Ask students to pretend they are one of the walls and describe what they have experienced. Encourage students to use all of their senses.

6. Ask students to choose one wall that they saw on their walk.

7. Explain the following assignment with students by saying, "We are going to write about some of the events that the wall you chose has experienced. Pretend that you are the wall and make a list of everything that you see, hear, feel, taste, or smell. Be sure to use words that describe the senses so that the list comes alive to anyone who reads it. After we have a class list, you are going to draw a picture and write a paragraph about something that your wall experienced. Your paragraph must have an introductory sentence, two or three sentences describing what your wall experienced, and a concluding statement."

Assessment

World Map Checklist
Based on the countries described in the book, students will place sticky dots or stars in the following countries (or continents) on a world map with 80% accuracy (11 or more correctly identified):

- Great Wall of China - China (Asia)
- Aborigine Wall Art - Australia (Australia)
- Lascaux Cave - France (Europe)
- Western Wall - Israel (Asia)
- Mahabalipuram’s Animal Walls - India (Asia)
- Muslim Walls - Saudi Arabia (Asia)
- Great Zimbabwe - Zimbabwe (Africa)
- Cuzco, Peru - Peru (South America)
- Taos Pueblo - United States (North America)
- Mexican Murals - Mexico (North America)
- The Canadian Museum of Civilization - Canada (North America)
- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial - United States (North America)
- Nelson Mandela’s Prison Walls - South Africa (Africa)
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- The Berlin Wall – Germany (Europe)

**Paragraph Assessment Checklist:**

- Is there an introductory statement?
- Are there two or three descriptive sentences about what the wall saw?
- Is there a concluding statement?

**Outstanding** – Students write an introductory statement, three descriptive sentences, and a concluding statement.

**Satisfactory** – Students write an introductory statement, one or two descriptive sentences, and a concluding statement.

**Needs Improvement** – Students are missing an introductory statement, write one or no descriptive sentences, or are missing a concluding statement.

**Extensions**

Students could create their own walls and write a story about what happened in view of the wall. Give each student or team of students the same craft materials to create the wall.

Ask students to choose a wall from the book and research the country in which it is located.

**Sources**


Web sites:
- [http://www.vietvet.org/thewall.html](http://www.vietvet.org/thewall.html)
- [http://web0.tiac.net/users/kalebeg/oz](http://web0.tiac.net/users/kalebeg/oz)
- [http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/imglist.html](http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/imglist.html)
- [http://web.utk.edu/~estes/walls.html](http://web.utk.edu/~estes/walls.html)
- [http://www.levitt.com/slideshow/s01p05.html](http://www.levitt.com/slideshow/s01p05.html)