

GTIP Think Piece –Developing cultural geography (Charles Rawding)

Charles Rawding (Edge Hill College of Higher Education) describes how trainees might incorporate music and film into their geography teaching

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Introduction

Geography along with other social sciences in higher education in recent years has taken a well-documented cultural turn. Trainee teachers will almost certainly have experienced a human geography curriculum with a very different focus from much of the 11-18 curriculum. Developments at both key stage 3 and within the OCR Pilot GCSE in 2009 attempted to adapt aspects of cultural geography for the school curriculum.

One of the strengths of modern cultural geography from the point of view of the classroom practitioner is its willingness to incorporate a range of source materials in an attempt to produce deeper, more nuanced and multiple geographies. This offers opportunities to introduce content that, in the past, might not have been considered 'geographical'.

Calls for the inclusion of such resources are not new (see e.g. Rawling, 1991) but the embedding of them in higher education suggests that trainee teachers may be both receptive to, and informed about, their role in aiding geographical interpretation and understanding. Therefore, this Think Piece describes how to encourage trainees to develop greater awareness of the possibilities of using music and film in everyday teaching.

Activities for a PGCE session

First, provide an example of a song that develops a clear sense of place, or focuses on a specific geographical issue. A good example of this is 'Country Life' by Show of Hands which looks in detail at current rural issues. Download the lyrics and a video of the group singing the song below.

[Country Life Lyrics \(78k\)](#)

[Country Life Video \(78.8M\)](#)

[Country Life Video \(17.3M\)](#)

Following a discussion of potential uses of the song ask trainee teachers to choose one from their own music collection (see examples in Figure 1) and describe briefly where they might use it in geography. This is the context for 'Using music' below.

Figure 1: 'Geographical songs' suggested by PGCE trainees for key stage 3 themes

Title	Key stage 3 theme	Sample lyric
Do they know it's Christmas	Development/Aid/LEDCs/ MEDCs/ Migration	There's a world outside your window/And it's a world of dread and fear/Where the only water flowing/Is the bitter sting of tears
Harvest for the world	Development/Global population	All babies together/Everyone a seed/Half of us are satisfied/Half of us in need
Ain't no mountain high enough	Definitions	Ain't no mountain high enough/Ain't no valley low enough/Ain't no river wide enough
Big yellow taxi	Urbanisation/Environment	They paved paradise and put up a parking lot/With a pink hotel, a boutique and a swinging hot spot/Don't it always seem to go/That you don't know what you've got til its gone/They paved paradise and put up a parking lot
Down in the tube station at midnight	Urban (London)	The distant echo of faraway voices boarding faraway trains/To take them home to the ones that they love and who love them forever/The glazed, dirty steps - repeat my own and reflect my thoughts/Cold and uninviting, partially naked/Except for toffee wrappers and this morning's paper/Mr Jones got run down/Headlines of death and sorrow - they tell of tomorrow/Madmen on the rampage/And I'm down in the tube station at midnight
Girl from Ipanema	Brazil	When she walks she's like a samba that/Swings so cool and sways so gentle, That when/She passes each one she passes goes 'a-a-ah!'
Where do the children play?	Urban/settlement	When you crack the sky, scrapers fill the air/Will you keep on building higher til there's no more room up there/Will you make us laugh, will you make us cry/Will you tell us when to live, will you tell us when to die/I know we've come a long way, we're changing day to day/But tell me, where do the children play?
Trinity (Luck Dube)	Racism	My brothers have been chasing racists all the time/Your brothers have been chasing freedom fighters all the time/But at the end of the day/We didn't know much about each other yeah/When you saw a black man/You saw a criminal/When I saw a white man/ I saw an oppressor/But now that we know where we went wrong/Let's unite

Next, focus on the use of film (see films table below). You could show the introductory section of *The Full Monty* which uses original promotional newsreel of *Sheffield, City of Steel* from the 1960s, before cutting with real comic effect to industrial dereliction and a former steelworks. See Morgan (2003) for a fuller discussion of using *The Full Monty*.

Trainees can be asked to identify an extract from a film (see Figure 2). The ensuing discussion about the importance of place in film will be wide-ranging and fruitful.

Figure 2: Films with geographical applications.

Title	Theme
The Full Monty	De-industrialisation
Brassed Off	De-industrialisation, decline of mining industry
Touching the Void	Extreme environments
Dumb and Dumber	American landscapes
Falling Down	Urban problems
Ice Age	Glaciation, glacial environments
Billy Elliot	Urban decay, de-industrialisation
Moonraker	Rio de Janeiro - Brazil
Point Break	Destructive waves
Gangs of New York	Development
Legend of Loch Lomond	Sparse population, low population densities
Twister	Tornadoes

Using music

Music's relevance and topicality for people of all ages makes it an ideal vehicle for capturing pupil interest (see Lambert and Morgan, 2005). From the point of view of delivering effective geography, there are perhaps three principal means of relating music to geographical themes and places:

1. in instances where performers are strongly linked with specific places
2. where lyrics explicitly discuss geographical themes
3. where music conjures images of place through frequent or well-known association.

Considering the first, there are a number of high profile performers who have become closely identified with place: in the UK the Beatles with Liverpool or Oasis with Manchester for instance. Examples from overseas include the Beach Boys and the Eagles with California, and Edith Piaf with Paris. Clearly these examples reflect the knowledge of the author. Discussions with trainees produced different responses, for instance The Jam with London from a 30-something male.

Additional geographical themes can be identified with the most popular performers. The Beatles have been responsible for a significant growth in tourism-related activity in Liverpool. [The Beatles Story](#) and Matthew Street along with the role of the National Trust in opening the former homes of Paul McCartney and John Lennon are all elements in the reconfiguration of Liverpool as a post-modern city.

The second, more productive area relates to song lyrics. Lyrics from songs often provide identifiably geographical themes and the potential for choosing appropriate songs is huge. As a newly qualified teacher delivering a chapter on sheep farming in Australia (Farleigh Rice, 1975) I was able to use the Australian folk song 'All among the wool boys, all among the wool' (by Martin Wyndham Read)! After one session on using music a trainee teacher posted the list shown in Figure 3 on the college's website.

Whilst on the net I found a forum where they had been discussing songs to be used in class. Some I think we might have in our list but some of them are ones that you will look at and think 'oh yeah, never thought of that!':

- River Deep Mountain High - Tina Turner
- Aint No Mountain High Enough - Diana Ross
- Penny Lane - Beatles

- Back in the USSR - Beatles
- From Russia With Love - Bond Theme
- In The City - The Jam
- Rock The Kasbah - The Clash
- We Are The World - USA For Africa
- Feed The World - Band Aid
- Fog on the Tyne - Lindisfarne
- Baker Street - Gerry Rafferty
- Scarborough Fair - Simon and Garfunkel
- Running up that Hill - Kate Bush
- Salisbury Plain - Peter Gabriel
- Life On Mars - David Bowie
- Inner City Blues - Marvin Gaye
- Y Viva Espana - Sylvia Vrethammar
- I Like To Be In America - from West Side Story
- Australia - Manic Street Preachers
- Rotterdam - Beautiful South (?)
- Should I stay or should I go? - The Clash (for push and pull factors)

Examples of the third type, i.e. links between music and place, might include the association of Italy with opera, Paris (or more specifically the Moulin Rouge) with the Can Can, the bagpipes with Scotland or the pan pipes with Andean South America.

These three approaches all offer the opportunity to develop an enhanced awareness of place in geographical themes.

Point out that because many school pupils listen extensively to music, it is possible to get them thinking about any geographies in their own collections. Thus enhancing the notion of how relevant and topical geography is to their lives.

Using film

While geography teachers make extensive use of video and documentary sources, much less use is made of contemporary film, even though many films provide a strongly developed 'sense of place'.

Considering geographical themes can include de-industrialisation - as illustrated by films such as *The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off* - and the impact of film and television on place, whether in terms of tourism marketing of places where television programmes and films are shot (e.g. Lord of the Rings and New Zealand for instance) or the effects of such (cultural industry activities) on the local community.

For instance, I was resident in a village (Binbrook, Lincolnshire) where much of *Memphis Belle* (Michael Caton Jones, 1990) was filmed. I observed at first hand the financial impact (entirely beneficial) of the film crew on the prosperity of the village public house and other services. While this impact was relatively short-lived (months rather than years), the impact on locations such as [Holmfirth](#) (where the series *Last of the Summer Wine* is filmed) and [Goathland](#) (where *Heatbeat* is recorded) can have greater long-term significance.

Conclusion

This illustrates how two topical and relevant elements of modern society - music and film - can be used to enrich the geography curriculum and enhance pupil engagement with the subject.

Bibliography

- Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: A short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Provides an interesting introduction to newer approaches written largely for undergraduates.)
- Farleigh Rice, W (1975) *Patterns in Geography Two*. London: Longman.
- Morgan, J. (2003) 'Cultural studies goes to school', *Geography*, 88, 3, pp. 217-24. (Argues persuasively for newer approaches to cultural geography being incorporated into the school curriculum, and uses *The Full Monty* to demonstrate a practical application of the theoretical ideas.)
- Lambert, D. and Morgan, J. (2005) *Teaching School Subjects: Geography*. London: Routledge Falmer
- Rawling, E. (1991) 'Places I'll remember', *Geography*, 76, 4, pp. 289-91.
- Taylor, L. (2004) *Representing Geography*. Cambridge: Chris Kington Publishing. (For potential uses in the classroom, offers a range of stimulating options, particular the section 'Whose view?' on the ideas of Doreen Massey (p. 40) and the photography of Ingrid Pollard (p. 44).)

Links

- [Internet Movie Database](#)
- [Cavern Club](#)
- [National Trust](#)
- [Mapville](#)
- [New Zealand Tourism](#)
- [Goathland](#)
- [Esk Valley - Goathland](#)

Journal abstracts

- Morgan, J. (2001) 'Popular culture and geography education', *IRGEE*, 10, 3, 284-297. [Abstract](#)
- Morgan, J. (2002) 'Teaching geography for a better world? The postmodern challenge and geography education', *IRGEE*, 11, 1, 15-29. [Abstract](#)