

(Source: based on Nicholls, A. and Kinninment, D (2001)

It is common for teachers to pose all the questions. The 5Ws approach encourages pupils to frame and ask the questions. It is a good introductory activity for an enquiry and helps pupils to understand that one form of evidence might not provide all the answers.

It is a valuable technique because pupils have to:

- consider the logic of asking particular kinds of questions;
- decide in what order questions should be posed;
- think what they *need to know* and why they need to find this out – before they begin;
- sort through the adequacy of the information; this often leads them to realize the source/s they are using may not hold all the answers and they may have to seek elsewhere.

5Ws generally uses *What? Where? Who? When? and Why?* - but in some topics it is appropriate to include *How?* Or even *Which?* See the framework [Five Ws And How](#). It is a transferrable skill that pupils can develop in other subjects.

Some hints on managing 5Ws

- The teacher can give the 5Ws headings, or can ask the pupils to generate them at the start of the activity.
- A good technique to use is *think-pair-share*. First pupils take time to think individually (silently) then share with a partner, then pairs share with the whole group.
- The context for them asking the questions can be important. In the earthquake example, pupils took on the role of reporters. They have to frame the questions *before* they reach the earthquake site, bearing in mind the news item they will need to write.
- *What remains unanswered* is a key question for the teacher to ask? How could they find out that information?
- An important question to ask in a debrief is, “*What makes a good question?*”
- A variant is to give out different photographs (or other resource) get one group to write the questions and another group to answer them.
- Be prepared for the reaction from some pupils that they would prefer you to give them the questions to answer!
- Less able pupils can find generating questions difficult – and often offer closed questions without a geographical focus. You will need to give them support to get started. It helps if you clearly define the “big question” for the activity – ‘writing a report on’.... is too vague!

Reference

Nicholls A and Kinninment D, (2001) *More Thinking through Geography*, Chris Kington Publishing.

Case studies to illustrate 5Ws Nicholls’ examples are: San Francisco earthquake, farming in upland areas, natural environment.