

## **Story telling**

This was originally developed as one of the thinking skills activities by David Leat (1998).

Storytelling, and the use of narrative, is a powerful way of conveying geographical information. It is a good retrieval practice activity because the students are required not only to recall information from memory, but also to sequence it and to think carefully about its meaning to tell the story to others.

The source of the story can be varied: a newspaper article; a magazine; recounted by a visitor. Stories with human drama are often best to gain student interest. This activity puts geography into real life contexts and it can be used to think about the concept of *causation*. The activity also provides an opportunity to use extended text.

### **Using storytelling in the classroom**

This activity is best organised with small groups. Three is ideal. The story is told to one from each group, while the pair that remain do a different activity – e.g. a quick paired quiz. Student 1 tells the story to student 2, who then retells it to student 3; finally student 3 retells the story to student 1. No note taking is allowed – they have to listen and remember.

The debrief for the activity should consider what they remembered and HOW they remembered it. Use this to help students developing memory skills. This can lead on to story-boarding and extended writing.

### **Planning and managing story telling**

Finding the story is often the most difficult part – start looking well in advance! Storytelling can be a very useful strategy for GCSE students using case studies, and these stories are easier to identify.

Class management needs to be very slick for this activity. Limit the number of questions that students can ask about the story, or the process will take too long. You need to monitor when groups are coming to a natural end of their story telling.

It can be helpful to have another person to assist in the lesson, to tell the original story or to manage groups. Ask your mentor or another teacher to co-teach the lesson, or use the TA. It is easiest to remove the first group from the room to tell the story, while the others remain working on an different activity.

### **Reference**

Leat, D. (1998) *Thinking through geography*, London: Chris Kington Publishing – Leat's examples are: *Lynmouth floods; volcanic eruption*.

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