

Background

Key concepts: location, place, space

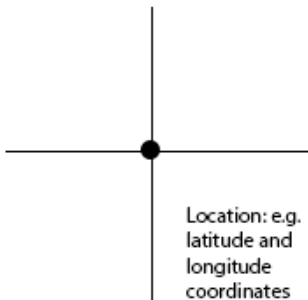
This exercise is designed primarily to help students examine how a sense of place is constructed through cultural practices and artifacts like music. It is also helpful for distinguishing between place and space.

Set-up (full class)

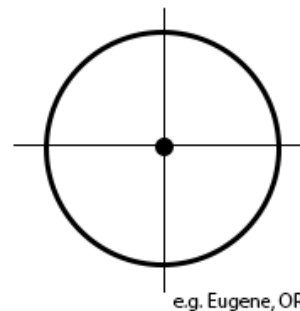
What is place? One definition (based on Marston and Knox, *Human Geography*) is location imbued with meaning.

Chalk board drawing:

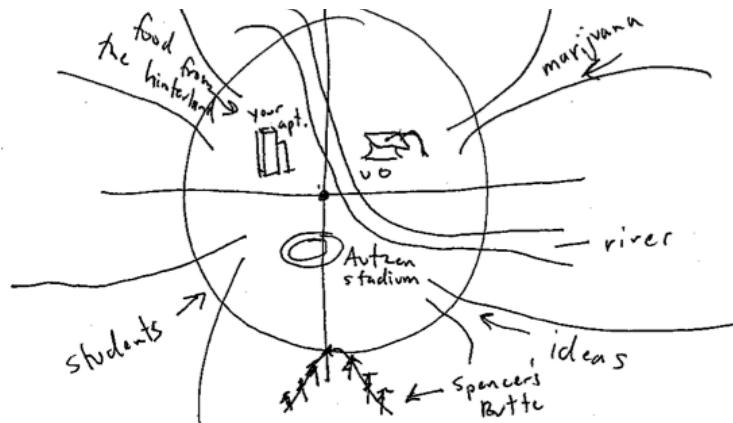
1. Location



2. Location + meaning



3. Meaning? Experiences (school, rainy weather), memories, activities (football games), unique landscape (Willamette River, Spencer's Butte), smells (Whitaker mill, the river), convergence of flows (textbooks, students, marijuana, hippy ideologies, etc.)



From Marston and Knox: place is the unique convergence of these flows that create meaning in a particular location. Space is what is between these convergences of flows. Location without meaning. (Of course this is contextual: Coburg Road is space when you're trying to get from place 1 (Eugene) to place 2 (Coburg), but it might be a meaningful place to you if you live on that road.)

Developed at the University of Oregon, Winter 2013.

How is a meaningful sense of place constructed?

Organically: barns in Pennsylvania, okra and collards in the South

Purposefully: memorial markers, bumper stickers, music

Listen and watch: Jay-Z, *Empire State of Mind* (<http://youtu.be/0UjsXo9l6I8>)

Lyrics handout:

Yea I'm out that Brooklyn, now I'm down in TriBeCa
right next to Deniro, but I'll be hood forever
I'm the new Sinatra, and since I made it here
I can make it anywhere, yea, they love me everywhere
I used to cop in Harlem, all of my Dominicanos
right there up on Broadway, pull me back to that McDonald's
Took it to my stash spot, 560 State St.
catch me in the kitchen like a Simmons whipping Pastry
Cruisin' down 8th St., off white Lexus
drivin' so slow, but BK is from Texas
Me, I'm out that Bed-Stuy, home of that boy Biggie
now I live on Billboard and I brought my boys with me
Say what's up to Ty-Ty, still sippin' mai tai's
sittin' courtside, Knicks & Nets give me high fives
I be Spike'd out, I could trip a referee
Tell by my attitude that I'm most definitely from....

[Chorus: Alicia Keys]

New York, concrete jungle where dreams are made of
There's nothin' you can't do
Now you're in New York
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you
Let's hear it for New York, New York,
New York

[Verse 2: Jay-Z]

Catch me at the X with OG at a Yankee game
Shit, I made the Yankee hat more famous then a Yankee can
You should know I bleed blue, but I ain't a Crip though
but I got a gang of -- walkin' with my clique though
Welcome to the melting pot, corners where we sellin' rock
Afrika Bambataa shit, home of the hip-hop
Yellow cab, gypsy cab, dollar cab, holla back
for foreigners it ain't for, they act like they forgot how to act
8 million stories, out there in it naked
City, it's a pity, half of y'all won't make it
Me, I got a plug, Special Ed "I Got It Made"
If Jeezy's payin' LeBron, I'm payin' Dwyane Wade
Three dice cee-lo, three Card Monty

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Labor Day Parade, rest in peace Bob Marley
Statue of Liberty, long live the World Trade
Long live the King yo, I'm from the Empire State that's

[Chorus]

[Verse 3: Jay-Z]

Lights is blinding, girls need blinders
so they can step out of bounds quick, the sidelines is
lined with casualties, who sip to life casually
then gradually become worse, don't bite the apple Eve
Caught up in the in-crowd, now you're in style
Anna Wintour gets cold, in Vogue with your skin out
City of sin, it's a pity on the wind
Good girls gone bad, the city's filled with them
Mami took a bus trip, now she got her bust out
Everybody ride her, just like a bus route
Hail Mary to the city, you're a virgin
And Jesus can't save you, life starts when the church end
Came here for school, graduated to the high life
Ball players, rap stars, addicted to the limelight
MDMA got you feelin' like a champion
The city never sleeps, better slip you an Ambien

[Chorus]

How, specifically, does the song evoke a sense of place with these lyrics and the images in the music video?

Activity:

Spend some time writing a description of a place that you know well—maybe the few blocks around your house, a mall in your hometown, your grandparents' farm, or the downtown area of a city where you studied abroad. Feel free to choose any place you know well, but try to write about a relatively small area and make sure it's one you can describe well. What makes it a unique convergence of flows? Try to evoke a sense of place with your description.

Share with a partner and hand-in.