

Dubai – the impossible city?

The Geography team at Bordesley Green Girls' School, Birmingham, aim to support the development of students' key geographical skills, and the application of these to a range of concepts through creative, engaging and challenging lessons.

As part of the *Cities, People and Change Project*, Claire Kimberley and her colleagues developed a series of innovative activities for Year 9 Geography, exploring the concept of sustainable cities, and with a focus on global learning. Claire took the example of Dubai, building on students' prior knowledge [and in some cases their first-hand experience of the city]. The series of activities shared below build towards an independent learning project, in which students design their own sustainable city.

Key questions	Suggested activities
Why is Dubai impossible?	<p>In groups or as a class, discuss 'What makes Birmingham?'</p> <p>Compare images of Venice and the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas – which is real?</p> <p>So, what makes a city? What makes a sense of place?</p> <p>Why is Dubai impossible? Students think about these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What do we already know about Dubai? What do we want to find out and how would we go about that? This could lead to a short piece of research, or the interrogation of some background information provided for them <input type="checkbox"/> What makes it famous? What makes it impossible? This could move towards a discussion about whether the 'impossible city' is sustainable.
How sustainable is Dubai?	<p>What do we mean by sustainable development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a group definition. <p>How sustainable is Dubai?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use text from Teaching Geography Today to complete a speaking and listening activity <input type="checkbox"/> Use a ranking activity [such as diamond 9] to group statements <input type="checkbox"/> Groups develop an idea to make Dubai more sustainable, to put to a panel of judges eg via a balloon debate. <p>What does the future hold for Dubai?</p> <p>Discuss possible and probable futures for Dubai with a particular focus on sustainable development.</p>



<p>How can we create the Dubai dream?</p>	<p>Independent learning project – approximately 4 or 5 lessons depending on ability and approach.</p> <p>Pupils develop ideas to create a more sustainable area of Dubai. They start with an empty piece of desert land. The end product is to produce a model of a fully sustainable city that takes into account the area’s natural geography. In the last lesson, pupils produce a ‘living museum’ of ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ In pairs, ask pupils what the ingredients of a city are. Need to look at social, physical, cultural etc. Could use a framework such as the Development Compass Rose, or the South African Cities Network model. ❑ Small groups produce a working list of what a city needs and research sustainable ideas. Could look at one of the new projects in Dubai such as Hydropolis as a stimulus. ❑ Groups design their area of the city on paper [eg base map] and start to look at where things should go and why. This may include opportunities for groups to re-think their sustainable development ideas. ❑ Groups then produce their model of the area of the city, with placards of information to show how it is sustainable. <p>Set up as a ‘living museum’. Pupils go around with an ideas sheet and write down the sustainable development ideas that they think are the best. These could then be shared in groups.</p>
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Claire Kimberley shares her reflections of using these ideas with her students:

“Overall, I think that the idea behind the unit worked really well and - looking at the pupil evaluations - it seemed a good unit to finish Year 9 on: it encompasses a range of issues, processes and key words, that they can pull together from KS3. My advice would be to really structure the group work tasks rigorously so that each pupil has a specific role. To help with this, I made a learning log where they spent some time at the beginning and end of the sessions planning and evaluating their work. What was nice about this unit was the ‘possible futures’ element, and being able to think about to what extent our cities are sustainable. The creative nature of the final project worked well for our pupils, and developed PLTS.”

Ideas developed by Claire Kimberley [Bordesley Green Girls’ School, Birmingham].

