

# CREATING A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

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Promoting Geographic Knowledge Through Literature Workshop

July 7-19, 2002

## **Background:**

Students should have a basic understanding of the five themes of geography and their importance in answering the questions; Where is it? Why is it there? What are the consequences of it being there? Previous lessons include map skills and a study of landforms and bodies of water.

## **Motivation:**

Alice McLerran's story, Roxaboxen, is about a group of children who use the resources of the desert and a few boxes to transform a desert area into a community that includes a town hall, jail, cemetery, houses and shops. Through discussion of the story, and student study of natural resources and people's wants and needs, students will design a classroom community of their own.

**Connection to the Curriculum:** Subject areas integrated in this activity are social studies, language arts and art.

**Teaching Level:** Grade 3

**Time Frame:** 3-4 class periods

**Geography Themes:** Location, Place, Human Environment Interaction, and Movement

**Standards:**

#1 - How to use maps and other geographical representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#3 - How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on the Earth's surface.

#4 - Knowing and understanding the physical and human characteristics of places.

#6 - How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

#11 - The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on the Earth's surface.

#12 - The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

#14 - How human actions modify the physical environment.

#15 - How physical systems affect human systems.

#16 - The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

#17 - How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

### **Lesson Focus:**

- ! How do communities organize to meet their needs and wants?
- ! How do physical environments affect systems?

### **Objectives:**

- ! Students will know and understand how geography influences the distribution of population and economic activities such as transportation, trade, and communication.

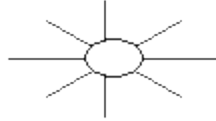
- ! Students will know and understand the purposes of geographic tools and technologies, such as reference works (e.g. atlases, gazetteers, geographic dictionaries, etc.)
- ! Students will know and understand changes in physical systems, such as seasons, climate and weather.
- ! Students will know and understand how geography influences the distribution of population and economic activities such as transportation, trade, and communication.
- ! Students will be able to identify the parts of a community and their importance by drawing a physical model of their ideal community.

### **Materials:**

- " geographic map of your town
- " description of the town of Roxaboxen
- " various colors of construction paper
- " markers, paints, crayons, colored pencils
- " glue and scissors
- " poster board
- " Roxaboxen, Alice McLerran
- " Roxaboxen and Community Comparison organizer
- " Design Your Own Community organizer
- " Design your Own Community activity directions

### **Procedure:**

1. Call students together in a group and ask them to think about "What makes a Community?"  
Chart all responses while categorizing into location, government, transportation, culture, goods and services, resources, etc.



2. Do a shared reading or read aloud of Roxaboxen, by Alice McLerran. Read with the purpose to discover what the Roxaboxen community was made up of.
3. Add to the “What makes a community?” chart after reading the story. Guide with questions if necessary.
4. Discuss how geography affects different communities. Using a map of your community and the description of Roxaboxen, compare the communities as defined by landforms, bodies of water, natural resources, transportation, climate, and the human features (chart on comparison organizer ).
5. Possible discussion questions:
  - Where are both places located?
  - Why do you think people chose to settle in each place?
  - How do the natural resources, landforms, and bodies of water affect the people living there? What is the relationship of the people and the environment?
  - What characteristics make this location a “place?” Which features give it personality?
  - Which features are natural physical features and which are human features? How have human features changed the landscape?
  - What transportation forms are available to the area? How do these forms affect the movement of people and goods into and out of the area?
6. Divide students into groups. Distribute a copy of the *Design Your Own Community* directions for each group or post on a chart or overhead (see attached).

7. After students have completed their community posters they should be given time to share with the whole group. Maps can be posted or displayed in the room.

**Assessment:**

Students will create their own community and will include the areas of landforms, bodies of water, natural resources, human features, climate, and transportation.

**Extensions:**

- Write a single page paper describing your community. Be sure to include 2 - 3 sentences about each part of the community.
- Set up a classroom government modeled after the mayor/city council (city manager) form of government. The teacher acts as mayor, and each group of 4 students is a district. Each district should elect a councilman, and decide on four rules that are needed for learning in the classroom. Each group will have its councilman speak before the mayor at a city council meeting, and the councilmen and mayor will vote on the rules to be adopted. Create a classroom Bill of Rights and on a poster or chart paper write the following:

*We the students of Mr./s. \_\_\_\_\_'s class have elected to adopt the following rules to ensure that we establish a community where all students can work in an environment that promotes growth and learning (list rules and have all students and the teacher sign the poster).*

**Resources:**

McLerran, Alice. 1991. Roxaboxen. Lothrop Lee & Shepard; ISBN: 0688075932

Roxaboxen and \_\_\_\_\_

town	landforms	bodies of water	natural resources	human features	climate	transportation
Roxaboxen						

(your town)						

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## **Community Name**

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## Landforms and Bodies of Water

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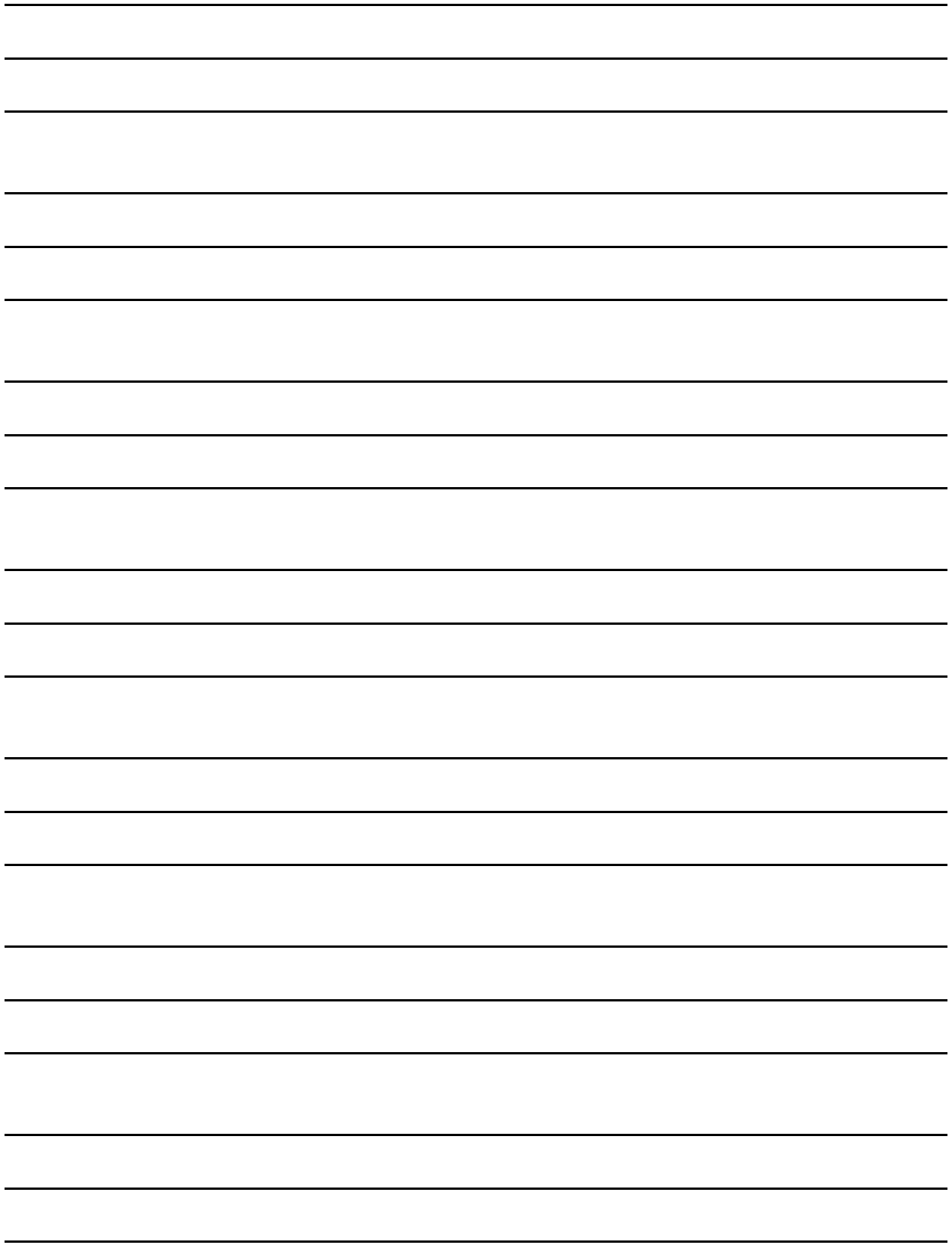
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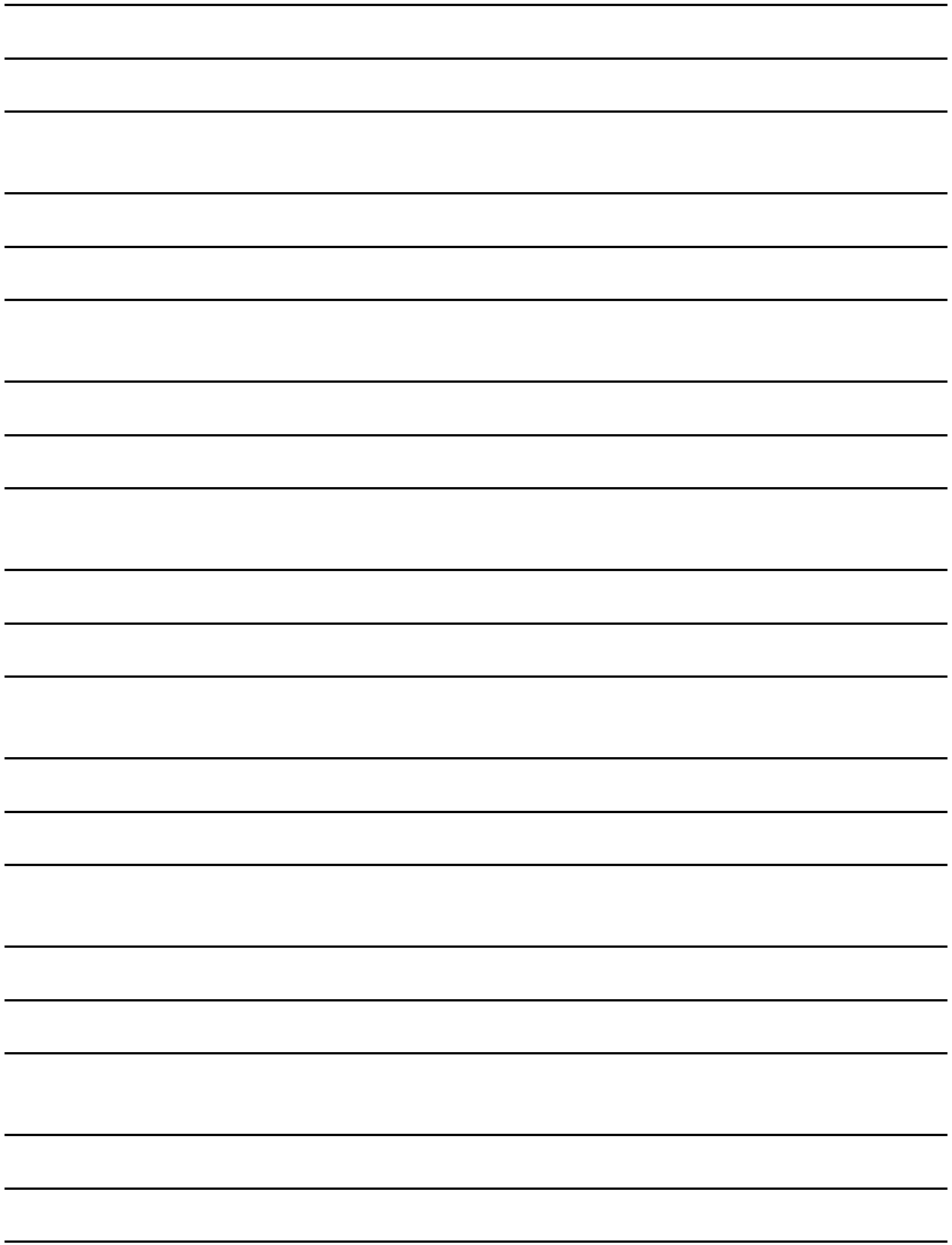


















the economy. The community should meet the needs and wants of its citizens.

3. Cut buildings and people from construction paper to show economics (shops, stores, banks, government offices, schools, etc.).
4. Illustrate roads and transportation forms (cars, planes, boats, trains, etc.).
5. Include people, and show how the natural resources of the area are used by the people in the community.
6. Be prepared to share your project orally with the class. Be creative!