

NOWHEREISLAND

EXPLORER PACK

Explorer Pack I: Myths, Stories and Nowhereisland

Nowhereisland is a real place, as well as a place to experiment. This makes it an ideal context for students to feel like they are making a tangible contribution, whilst still playing with ideas and new kinds of thinking. Nowhereisland Explorer Packs can be used for quick ideas, for short discussions in tutor sessions, or for larger projects. You can even use the outcomes of these activities as entries into the Resident Thinker competition.

This Explorer Pack shows how Nowhereisland connects with some of the myths and stories about islands and about the Arctic and has examples of ways Nowhereisland can be used to inspire new stories. The ideas and discussion points in this Explorer Pack overlap with some of those in other Explorer Packs, and teachers are advised to look at other Packs for further Nowhereisland inspiration and ideas.

The starting point is a video made in the Arctic of a Nowhereisland creation myth and the focus for the topic is Nowhereisland, but many other examples of stories for all ages and abilities are referred to and there is plenty of scope for teachers to make their own connections and use other resources.

Preparation

Have a good look at the Nowhereisland website. Start with About The Project section, which has some introductory information, then have a look at the Logbook, in particular the entries for September 2011, during the Arctic Expedition. Then look at the Myths and Stories section in the Origins part of the Embassy. Look out for good story material as you browse!

Watch and download any related Nowhereisland resources such as the creation myth video, Nowhereisland animation, PowerPoint slides or Nowhereisland introduction film to help you introduce the project. You can find links to these on the Schools Resources page.

Gather other resources you may need such as books, images, DVDs and objects, choosing from those listed in this Pack or others that you wish to use.

Getting started in the classroom: What is Nowhereisland?

Start with asking your class what they associate with the terms 'Arctic' and 'Islands'. You can do this in small group spider diagram sessions or any format that works for you and your class. You can also use some of the PowerPoint images to get discussion going. For example, showing a picture such as the Gulliver's Travels illustration of the floating island of Laputa is an unusual image to get some new kinds of discussion going. At this stage don't worry about the answers and discussions being about Nowhereisland: any thinking and discussion is good.

The **Nowhereisland animation** has been made by primary school children. It is a good way to introduce the project to KS1 and KS2.

The **PowerPoint** slides and notes can also be used to introduce the project. It is recommended that you edit this to suit the needs of your class and the themes of myths and stories.

The **Nowhereisland** introductory film is a short documentary and gives an excellent overview, especially for KS3 and KS4 above.

In all cases, encourage questions, discussion and comments that help to tell the stories of **Nowhereisland** or link to other myths and stories. Some discussion areas could be:

Do you know any stories, myths and legends about the Arctic? As you will see in the Embassy section about Arctic myths and stories there are many tales and legends that involve the far North, many of them familiar to children. Why might the Arctic be used for a setting for stories?

Have you ever stared out at an island? Or been to one? Have you ever heard a story about an island? Like the Arctic, islands are familiar settings for stories and many children will know some. Why might islands be used as settings for stories?

A Nowhereisland Creation Myth

Watch the film. It was made during the 2011 Arctic Expedition when some of the team decided to write the creation myth. It is performed here by Kieran Kirkland onboard the expedition ship, The Noorderlicht, in front of a glacier.

Follow up with discussion to ensure the basic elements within the story are clear. Then move on to more in depth questioning about what the story might mean. Here's one way of doing this:

1. **Re-telling the story in their own words.** Ask the children to choose a small section of the story to draw or collage. Each child uses a 10cm square white paper and small squares of shades of blue and white paper to create a collage. Assemble the squares in order to create a story-strip. Plug any gaps with more drawings/collage. Children could also add words but make sure this has some continuity such as just one or two word captions to capture each moment in the story.
2. **Explore allegory.** Using examples such as The Wizard of Oz, where each character represents a group of people within society. Or fables such as The Hare and The Tortoise which use animals to illustrate a moral tale and offer guidance for human behaviour. Discuss how storytellers use allegory and how the Nowhereisland creation myth also uses this. There are some images in the PowerPoint that can help illustrate discussion.
3. **Explore creation myths.** Explore 1 or 2 other creation myths such as in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Ancient Egyptian beliefs and Norse and Viking culture. What characteristics do they share with each other and with the Nowhereisland creation myth? There are some images in the PowerPoint that can help illustrate discussion.
4. **Making your own creation myth.** Choose a landscape feature in your locality (a strange-shaped tree in the park, a hill or mountain, a patch of overgrown wasteland) and develop stories about how it came to be that way. Use the experiences from the first part of this process to mix fact, fiction, allegory and fantasy.

5. **Illustrate your new creation myth.** Extend the approach you used when making the image earlier on. This time you could use larger squares of paper and introduce photocopied images of the local landmark for children to combine with the paper collage.
6. **Reflect on the process.** Use the experiences of constructing your own myth to reflect on the Nowhereisland creation myth. Watch it again and discuss what the storyteller may mean in his use of allegory and what this means for the new nation of Nowhereisland.

Creating a Nowhereisland story

The journey that Nowhereisland undertakes, from the High Arctic, to the Jurassic Coast to the Bristol Channel, and the process of this island becoming a new nation and gathering citizens, makes unusual and inspiring story material. Depending on the age and ability of your class, creating the story can be supported in different ways. Here is one suggestion that can be adapted for your group and subject area:

1. **Discuss more examples of stories about islands and the Arctic.** From Gulliver's Travels and Robinson Crusoe to the Persian stories of Sinbad the Sailor and the legend of Atlantis, islands are used as settings in many picture books, novels and films. These are just a few examples and your school library is likely to have lots more. Many of these stories have picture book versions, film stills and colour plates from older editions. Pick a few of these as examples of stories and related images and ask students to research further examples. Discuss why islands are popular settings for stories.
2. **Compose a Nowhereisland story.** Using processes you find successful and appropriate to your class, support students to develop their own Nowhereisland story using the experience and knowledge they have built up in previous tasks. One example would be a story, told from the point of view of the island itself, as it was formed, became a new nation and began to travel south in search of a population. Many other approaches are possible.
3. **Create a visual story, drama or animation.** As well as written stories, students could develop visual artwork, drama, animation or other ways of telling the Nowhereisland story. In these cases, students and/or teachers should also research examples of islands in art, drama and animation.
4. **Create story postcards.** If one of the characters in the story sent a postcard home halfway through the story, what would it say? Design the Nowhereisland postcard and write the card. You could even send it to the Nowhereisland office (see Contacts section on the website)

Sharing your work

The Nowhereisland team would really like to hear about what you get up to. You can send us pictures, scans, photocopies or post anything to the Nowhereisland Facebook page. You can find contact details on the Contact section of the website. We may even be able to include examples of writing or pictures in the mobile museum, also called The Embassy, which travels with Nowhereisland on the south west journey.

Enter the Resident Thinker Competition

Any of the above work you complete before 30 March 2012, you can send in as an entry to the Resident Thinker competition and, if selected, it will join the work of artists, professors and writers as one of our weekly Resident Thinker contributions. See the Resident Thinker section of the website for details.