

Place Names

written by Carol Westlake



Introduction

Are place names Archaeology?

Place names are not something we can see or touch. They exist without being tangible until we write them down. However, they represent the landscape, the activities and sometimes the aspirations of our ancestors and they help us to understand how people in the past explained the world around them.

These activities have been designed for use with Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils.

General learning objectives

- embed aspects of archaeology in the school curriculum.
- excite pupils' historical imaginations
- make pupils more aware of their built and linguistic environment
- support literacy as part of the National Strategy.
- develop pupils' thinking skills through prediction, hypothesis and problem solving.

Specific learning objectives

- To investigate the appearance and nature of London in the past
- To investigate the value of place names in the study of the past

They can be used as a 'stand-alone' package or as enrichment of the English, Geography, History or Citizenship Programmes of Study:

English (Speaking and listening, Reading, Writing, Group discussion and interaction, Language variation)

Geography (KS1&2: Unit 1 – Around our school: The local area. Unit 6 – Investigating our local area. Unit 9 – Village settlers. KS3: Unit 1 – Making connections. Unit 5 – Exploring England)

History (KS1&2: Unit 6abc – Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? Unit 18 – What was it like to live here in the past? KS3: Britain 1066-1500)

Citizenship (Skills of enquiry, communication and participation)

Worksheets and other resources are available on the web site.

NB: There are often conflicting explanations of London place names and the meanings of some have been lost over time. For the purposes of these activities definitions have been taken from A Dictionary of London Place Names by A.D. Mills (see Where to find out more).

Lesson One

Learning objectives:

Pupils will investigate possible definitions of some more unusual London place names in order to stimulate interest and enquiry in the subject

Equipment:

None needed (You may wish to have the Dictionary of London place names and a local map handy)

Introduction:

Over the centuries we have lost touch with the original meanings of many of London's place names. Children are naturally curious about the derivation of the names of places familiar to them and will enjoy developing explanations for those shown below. This activity will get pupils thinking about language and how place names are constructed.

What you need to do:

Starter

1. Give pupils one place name and ask them to draw it and write a definition underneath. A good one to start with is Elephant and Castle or Tower Hill

Development

2. In pairs, pupils write a definition for each of these London place names. Tell the pupils not to worry about getting things wrong – just to use their imaginations

Alternatively, alone or in pairs, decide how you will draw a picture to illustrate each of these place names:

- Angel
- Swiss Cottage
- Knightsbridge
- Parliament Hill
- Wormwood Scrubs

3. Ask pairs to feed back and discuss alternative suggestions. You may wish them to record their own suggestions or agreed class definitions.

Extension: What other names have always puzzled you? Make a list as a group and work out a definition for these.

You could give a copy of the Underground map or a local map to provide ideas

Plenary

How could we find out the real definitions? (See *Where to find out more*)

NB: The real definitions are:

- **Angel** - named after a medieval pub called the Angel
- **Swiss Cottage** – named after the house of a local rich man following the fashion for things Swiss in the Victorian period
- **Knightsbridge** – a bridge over the River Westbourne over which wealthy citizens passed
- **Parliament Hill** – either – because Parliament can be seen from here or because an early parliament was held outside London to escape the plague
- **Wormwood Scrubs** – heathland (scrubland) where the herb wormwood could be found

Lesson Two

Learning objectives:

Pupils will become familiar with the most common prefixes and suffixes used in London place names (mainly Anglo-Saxon).

They will become more confident in their ability to explain place name derivation

Equipment:

Worksheet One

Map of S. England (photocopied from an Atlas)

Introduction:

We know the meanings of certain parts of place names. These examples are mainly Anglo-Saxon and were first used during the Medieval period. Pupils can use these to go one stage further and suggest definitions for the words on Worksheet One.

What you need to do:

Starter

1. Recap place names from Lesson One. Have any pupils come up with more suggestions since then?

Development

2. Read through and explain some of the main prefixes and suffixes from Worksheet One. Give pupils the map and ask them to find examples that contain these. They could use a highlighter or underline them

3. Give out Worksheet One and ask pupils to decide on a definition for each of these. Again, stress that the negotiation is as important as the final decision

Extension: Give the 5 more difficult place names as an Extension

Plenary

Discuss findings as a class.

Lesson Three

Learning objectives:

Pupils will investigate the physical appearance of London in the past in order to develop skills in reading maps to collect information. They will investigate the value of place names in the study of the past and develop skills of prediction, hypothesis and problem solving

Equipment:

Colour version of Tube map (available from Transport for London website)

Black and white photocopy of Tube map

Worksheet Two

Writing frame

Coloured pencils

Introduction:

Pupils can use the familiar map of the London Underground system to come to some conclusions about London in the past. However, remember that the Tube Map is a stylised representation and is not accurate or to scale.

What you need to do:

Starter

1. In groups, give each pupil an A4 colour copy of the Tube map and ask them to spend a few minutes familiarising themselves with it. Alternatively, project a copy of the map onto a whiteboard.

Development

2. Ask the pupils to work out how the words listed below are connected (see definitions below):

Green

Park

Wood

Common

Field

3. Introduce the task. Pupils will investigate whether there are any patterns in the location of place names that refer to 'green' spaces:

These will give us clues as to how this land was used in the past and what activities our ancestors were involved in.

4. Give pupils a black and white version of the map and coloured pencils. Ask them to draw a key at the bottom of the map, choosing a different colour for each of the 5 features.

5. Pupils then shade as many names as they can find according to the key.

6. Pupils can then answer the questions on Worksheet Two.

Extension: The Tube map does not accurately show distances and locations of places in London. It was designed to show how the stations and lines are linked together but does not represent the London above the ground.

Use an Ordnance Survey map of London and do this activity with it. Do you notice any differences?

You could also use a map showing bus routes

Plenary

Use the questions on the worksheet as the basis for feedback on what pupils have discovered

There is an essay that can be used as a Homework Task

Alternatively, pupils could design a fact page or poster to communicate some of the things they have learned about London place names

Glossary

Common An area of land that all can use, eg: to collect firewood, graze animals, pick fruit. People had the right to use common land

Field An enclosed piece of land used for farming – arable (crops) or pasture (grazing animals)

Green A central area of land in a village where animals could be rounded up and protected

Green space Any area of land that has not been built on and contains grass, plants or trees

Park An area of land used for pleasure by the monarch or nobility. This usually meant hunting

Wood An area containing a large amount of trees

Where to find out more

Read

What's in a name? CM Harris London Transport Museum 2005

A Dictionary of London Place Names. A D Mills Oxford 2004

English Place Names. K Cameron Batsford 1979

Clues from Names. G Clegg Wayland 1998

Everybody's Guide to Historic London. J. Kiek; D Cheepen Quiller 1997

London: The Biography. P Ackroyd. Chatto and Windus. 2000

Visit

London Transport Museum, Covent Garden

Museum of London, London Wall

Museum of London, Docklands

Surf

Downloadable tube map: www.tfl.org.uk

London Transport Museum: www.ltmuseum.co.uk
(has 35" x 25" posters of the Tube map)

Museum of London: www.museumoflondon.org.uk
(especially the Postcodes Project)

Greenwood's map of London 1827 Place names:
www.users.bathspa.ac.uk.greenwood/places.html
(find through Google)

Has links with the 1827 map which is very useful for showing change over time

London place names: www.lineone.net/~krysstal/londname.html
Has interesting, if not always accurate, explanations of place names
(find through Google)

www.oldbaileyonline.org/search/place

A really interesting site that finds place names mentioned in trials at the Court using contemporary maps

Worksheet 1

How do place names work?

We know the meanings of parts of place names:

-ton	means	a farm
-ham	means	a village
-ing	means	people/tribe/family of an important person
-wick	means	a specialised farm or settlement
-holt	means	woodland
-gate	means	a gate
-ford	means	a place to cross a river
-stow	means	a place where people meet; a holy place
-minster	means	monastery
strat-	means	Roman road

1. In groups think of one example of a place name that includes each of the above (you could think of examples from London or from the whole country).

2. Decide on a definition for each of the following. The first one has been done for you:

Place name	Possible meaning
Northolt	Woodland in the north/to the north
Southgate	
East Ham	
Westminster	
Kingston	
Highgate	
Chiswick	
Stratford	

*Extension: What about these more difficult ones?

Place name	Possible meaning
Islington	
Walthamstow	
Kensington	
Barking	
Newington	

Worksheet Two

Investigating London's place names

1. Study the Underground map. Can you find your nearest tube station to:

Your home?	
Your school?	

2. In your groups study these words and come to a conclusion about what links them together. *There are definitions in the glossary below.

Green

Park

Wood

Common

Field

3. You are going to investigate whether there are any patterns in the location of place names that refer to these 'green' spaces:

These will give us clues as to how this land was used in the past and what activities our ancestors were involved in.

4. Choose 5 colours and draw a key at the bottom of a black and white version of the Tube map, using the 5 words in the brackets above. Shade the River Thames in blue.

5. Use the colours to shade as many place names as you can find in each category.

6. When you have done this, answer these questions in your groups:

Study your completed map carefully.

- Can you see any patterns in the colours? Write a sentence to describe any that you can see.
- What do these place names tell us about what London would have looked like in the past?
- Are you surprised by how much green space this map suggests?
- What sort of jobs does this suggest people might have had?
- Find your part of London on the map. How much green space is there here?

Extension

Use all the information from your work on place names to answer this question:

How useful are place names to people studying London's past?

There is a writing frame to help you if you need it.

Or: Create a fact page or poster to explain what you have learned about London place names

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Green A central area of land in a village where animals could be rounded up and protected

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How to write your essay on place names

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

In this paragraph explain what sort of things place names can tell us

Paragraph 2

In this paragraph explain some of the parts of place names that can give us clues to the past

Paragraph 3

In this paragraph explain the patterns you found on your map

Paragraph 4

In this paragraph explain what you have learned about London in the past from this work

Paragraph 5

In this paragraph explain how useful you think place names can be

