

A-Level Geography Human Transition Tasks

Within Geography, one of the most important concepts to understand is the concept of place and this will be one of the key focuses of our first topic of study in September. Many people tend to get the concept of place confused though and often mistake it for locale. A locale is a fixed Geographical location, such as Altrincham, the UK, Europe or your house. Place however is a lot more complex and takes into account the physical and human characteristics of the area and what our views of these might be. As a result, many people can view places differently where as a locale is fixed. London will always be London according to its locale, yet due to its place people will have very differing opinions of it for a variety of different reasons.

The following factors will influence your opinion of a place but are by no means an exhaustive list:

The Physical Landscape – What are the natural and physical landscapes like? Are the physical landscapes picturesque or polluted? What is the architecture of the buildings like and what is your opinion of it? Are the buildings cramped or spacious and how does that make you feel? Is the area well cared for or is it dilapidated and crumbling? Think about the environmental quality survey you did as part of your GCSE Human Fieldwork as this was a way of assessing the physical landscape.

The History – are you aware of the history of the area? If you are how does that make you feel? Was the locale a site for a famous battle or an atrocity or is it built to remember those things? Does the history of a site influence the way you feel about it?

The Culture – are you aware of any cultural connotations of the area? Are there certain activities that are encouraged or discouraged here? Is there anything to do with the perceived culture that you disagree with or find offensive? Is there anything to do with the perceived culture that makes you particularly like the area?

The Typical Behaviours – are there certain behaviours that are encouraged or discouraged in the locale? Does this make you feel restricted or liberated? Do you agree or disagree with the behaviours?

Personal Memories – what are your memories of the locale? Are they good or bad memories? Does this influence the way that you feel about the area?

Task 2 – The History

The history of areas can often create a conflict of interests as different people have different opinions and uses of the place. History can often create powerful emotions and feelings amongst different people and these can often ‘dominate’ a locale, constantly effecting local people’s everyday lives. Equally, they can evoke feelings and emotions that many people may want to forget, may not feel directly responsible for or may actually feel directly opposed to. Below are two famous examples of this.

Between 2003 and 2005, American architect Peter Eisenman worked with British engineering firm Buro Happold to create a memorial to the Holocaust in the centre of Germany’s capital city, Berlin. The site chosen was once covered by the Berlin Wall and known as ‘the killing strip’ where many people attempted to escape from East Germany and during the Second World War it housed the administrative centre of Adolf Hitler’s government and his private bunker.

It covers 19,000 square meters and comprises of almost 3000 concrete slabs, each around 2.5 metres long, 1 metre wide and between 20cm and 5 metres tall. It holds the names of 3 million Jewish Holocaust victims. It cost the German Government around 25 million Euros to construct and dominates a large area of central Berlin and is surrounded by shops, offices and apartments.



1. What feelings do you imagine most visitors get when walking around the memorial?

2. How might a local person’s feelings of the locale differ from a tourist’s?

3. Why may some local people actually have opposed the construction of the memorial?

4. How does the history of the area effect the way people might feel about it today?

Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) was a US Army General who was widely celebrated for his role in several conflicts such as the US-Mexico War. However, following the start of the US Civil War, Lee resigned from the US army to join the Confederacy who opposed the abolition of slavery in the USA. Lee himself had complex beliefs surrounding slavery and had personally helped to free several slaves. Despite this though he opposed the immediate abolition of slavery that sparked the US Civil War, believing that slavery should only be ended in the future when it was part of 'God's plan'.

Today Robert E. Lee is celebrated as a hero of both the US army and the Confederacy due to his devotion to duty and serving his country as well as being a highly successful military tactician. In 1913, an iconic statue was built of him in Charlottesville, Virginia to commemorate his legacy. This has become a popular site for protest against racism and perceived institutionalised racism in the USA and was shrouded in black in 2017 before being uncovered again in 2018 but officials from the government have refused to remove it all together.

1. Why might one person may see this place in a positive way?

2. Why might one person see this place in a negative way?






3. In what way has the history of this place created a conflict of interest?

In summary, how do you feel that the **History** of a locale can influence the way people feel about it?

Task 3 – The Culture

For each of these Manchester locales, briefly describe what the culture of the area is like either from the photo or your knowledge/research.

Then explain why this might make people either **like** the area or **dislike** it.

| Locale | Description of the culture | Why might people like this | Why might people dislike this |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>'The Curry Mile', Rusholme</p>  | <p>Traditional Asian restaurants, takeaways and shops. Busy and active nightlife.</p> | <p>Asian migrants/descendants enjoy the celebration and availability of traditional cultures. Other people can experience new cultures and foods in a more traditional setting.</p> | <p>May find it noisy. May feel that many of the shops only cater to certain people and may feel excluded.</p> |
| <p>Hale, Altrincham</p>  | <p>A quiet village on the rural-urban fringe. Popular with high earners and retirees. Tries to adopt a traditional rural British way of life.</p> | | |
| <p>Northern Quarter</p>  | | | |

In summary, how do you feel that the perceived **Culture** of a locale influences how people feel about it?

Task 4 – The Typical Behaviours

This is similar to the culture of a place, since different cultures prompt different behaviours. However certain types of place also encourage us to conform to certain behaviours and obey often unwritten rules and this in turn influences the way we may feel about that particular place.

For each of the following locales, write down a few words or phrases to describe how you would behave in that place. This behaviour can be due to either unwritten rules that you feel you must abide by or because actual behaviours are enforced, eg. School rules.

After that, add to the next column of the table how that makes you feel about that place. Does it make you like or dislike it? Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Perhaps awkward or happy, angry even? Equally do you agree with the behaviours that are enforced and encouraged? If you disagree with them or find them constricting, you are more likely to feel uncomfortable in that place. Try to explain why you feel this way, linking it back to the behaviours.

| Place | Typical behaviours | Resulting Feelings |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A church or place of worship | | |
| A football/sports stadium | | |
| An exam hall | | |
| A music concert | | |

People’s behaviours in certain locations can equally result in a conflict of interests. If people fail to adhere to the often unwritten rules in certain places, it can generate feelings of anger and upset many people who do adhere to the rules. For example, somebody who makes a lot of noise in an otherwise quiet church may annoy those trying to quietly pray or look around.

Consider the Berlin Holocaust Memorial we looked at earlier. Images such as these have promoted anger and frustration from many communities and there have been calls to restrict this kind of behaviour by actually introducing criminal laws to prevent it.



1. What are the typical behaviours you feel should be followed in this place?

2. Why might many people be opposed to the behaviours seen in these photos?



3. How might this also be seen as a conflict of interests?

In summary, how do you feel that the **Typical Behaviours** of a locale influences how people feel about it?

Task 5 – Personal Memories

People's own personal memories play a large role in their opinions of different places. Most people have a particular affinity for places where they have made happy memories such as a childhood home or a place they regularly visited on holiday and likewise dislike places where they have particularly bad memories of, such as returning to the scene of an accident.

For many people, shared memories may create general feelings about certain locations. A good example of this is Ground Zero in New York, the site of the 9/11 terror attacks. For most people, memory of this tragic event means that when most people visit the site, they will collectively feel the same negative feelings and emotions such as sadness and view the site in a similar way.

For many locales though this is personal. For one person they may have had great experiences at Wellington School and enjoyed their time there and therefore think of the place very positively. For another person, they may have had a very negative experience and school may have come at a difficult time in their lives and therefore they are likely to think of the place quite negatively due to their own personal experience. Wellington School is still the same locale, but a very different place to each person.

For each of the following locales, try to think of a believable scenario where one person may see it as a positive place based upon their memories, but another may see it as a negative place based upon their memories.

The first two locales have been suggested for you but try to fill the last two boxes with locales of your own.

| Experience of a positive viewing person | Locale | Experience of a negative viewing person |
|---|-------------------|--|
| May have got very good GCSEs and A-levels. Had lots of friends. Member of sports teams and extra curricula clubs. | Wellington School | Struggled with most subjects. Didn't have many close friends and commonly fell out with people. Didn't enjoy going to school |
| | A local park | |

| | | |
|--|-----------|--|
| | The beach | |
| | | |
| | | |

In summary, how do you feel that **Personal Memories** of a locale influences how people feel about it?

Task 6 – Your Perception of Place

Everybody's ideal place would be different since we are all different people with different opinions and our ideal place is equally a reflection of our personality. If you were to design the ideal place though, what would it look, feel and be like?

Consider what the following would each be like in your ideal place and explain your reasoning for each:

The Physical Landscape (what would the physical and human landscape look like?):

The History (what would the history of the actual locale be, would anything be commemorated there? If any at all, sometimes many people prefer a blank slate!):

The Culture (what culture would be adopted, this could be the culture of a particular nationality or could be a 'relaxed, laid back culture' or a 'culture of hard work'):

The Typical Behaviours (how would you ideally like people to behave in this locale?):

Unfortunately, we can't just design ourselves our ideal place and dictate how people behave in it and so we have to make do with the existing places in the world. However, most people will always find certain locales that they find a particular attachment to based upon the criteria we have examined, and equally will find locales they hate based upon the same.

Consider a locale either in the UK or anywhere in the world that you view in a **positive light**. It could be a whole city, an area, a building or a monument. What is it about that place that makes you see it in a positive light?

Focus on:

The Physical Landscape:

The History:

The Culture:

The Typical Behaviours:

Personal Memories:

For the same locale, why might somebody have an opposing view and see this place in a negative light?
