

Story of This Place

Activity Guide



Interpret the history of a location using photographs and maps. Encourage visitors to add to this documentation using the GLOBE Observer app.

Purpose

Land cover changes over time, sometimes suddenly and sometimes gradually. Documenting these changes reveals a lot about the landscape, and helps us discover the story of this place.

Time

5 minutes to 1 hour

Materials

- Photographs, maps, illustrations and/or written accounts from your site
- Smartphone or tablet (optional)
- Paper and writing/coloring utensils (optional)

Steps

1. Choose a theme to focus on. Which topics are relevant to your organization's resources and/or mission? Which topics do your visitors care about?

Ideas for Themes

a. Land Use Change

Has this area been developed over time? Has it undergone an environmental restoration?

b. Disasters

Has this area experienced disasters that have changed the land cover (such as, fires, floods, or drought)?

c. Phenology

How does this area change from one season to the next? Does it change at the same time every year?

2. Find and share historical evidence related to your theme. This evidence could be 10 years old or 100 years old. A National Park might share historic photos while a relatively new museum or library might share photos from its opening day.

Examples of Historical Evidence

- a. Photographs (Can visitors still view the site where the photo was taken? Consider making a [Magic Window](#) for visitors to use.)
 - b. Maps or Illustrations
 - c. Historical Accounts
3. Insert visitors into the story. Ask if this is their first visit. Have they witnessed similar land cover change elsewhere?
 4. Ask visitors to gather their own evidence using GLOBE Observer and compare their observations with historical evidence. How has the landscape changed? What predictions can they make about the future?

Expansions

Adopt a Pixel: Create a Repeat Photography Station

Mark a spot for people to take observations from. This could be a wooden post or a painted mark on the ground. If possible, indicate how far away 50 meters is with another post or landmark. Share previous observations with visitors to explore whether or not the land cover has changed.

Tell Your Story: Ask Visitors to Draw, Write, or Act Out Their Story

For classes and longer presentations, you may wish to ask participants to write and illustrate the story of this place. This can be an individual or collaborative effort.

Decide on an appropriate medium based on your audience. How old are they? How much time do they have? Consider allowing younger children to draw or act out their story. Older children can write their story, while adults may enjoy the challenge of using word magnets to tell their story.

Help participants plan their story by asking them to identify the following elements:

- **Location:** Will this story take place at their current location or somewhere else?
- **Time:** Ask participants to examine evidence and observations from the past and present, and make predictions about the future. Will their story take place over hundreds of years or just a few days?
- **Characters:** Who are the actors in their story? These characters could be people or animals (or even inanimate objects that have been brought to life). Can these characters change the landscape? Are they affected by changes in the landscape?
- **Events:** What *happens*? Without some kind of event, a story is just a description of a setting and characters.

Story of this Place Planning Worksheet

After exploring the history of a location, using the GLOBE Observer app to document the present, and making predictions about the future, use this worksheet to plan out your story.

Story Element	Example	Your Story
Location	Baltimore's Inner Harbor	
Time	Pre-colonial to present day	
Characters	People who live in the Baltimore region and depend on the harbor	
Events	Transition from wetlands to industry, from industry to tourism, addition of artificial wetlands to improve recreation	

Past	Present	Future
The natural wetlands along the Patapsco River are removed to make way for the town of Baltimore and various industries.	The harbor is now used primarily for tourism. However, visitors are advised against entering the harbor due to water quality concerns.	Organizations are adding features like artificial wetlands and rain gardens along the harbor in order to improve water quality and increase opportunities for recreation like boating and swimming.

