

# National Geographic Lesson: Reading the Cultural Landscape of Iceland

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**LESSON TITLE:** Recognizing Place: Reading the Cultural Landscape of Iceland

**RECOMMENDED GRADES:** 9-12

**TIME NEEDED:** One – 85 Minute Class

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Students will:

Be able to explain the ideas of Carl Sauer regarding the cultural landscape, and practice “reading” a landscape to see human connections to the environment. Students will then apply ideas to their own communities to explain the cultural landscape of their hometowns.

## **MATERIALS:**

Materials that will need to be gathered or prepared for this lesson.

Computer with projector, and a method of compiling student answers. Students should have access to computers to be able to complete the activity. Computers should be able to access google earth online, or have google earth pre-installed on desktop.

## **PREPARATION:**

The following should be prepared in advance.

Teachers should take time to familiarize themselves with google earth, specifically adding points to maps, and then sharing them. Teachers should also look over example pictures and notes (below) to come up with a good idea of talking points for each one.

## **DIRECTIONS:**

Suggested step by step instructions and pacing.

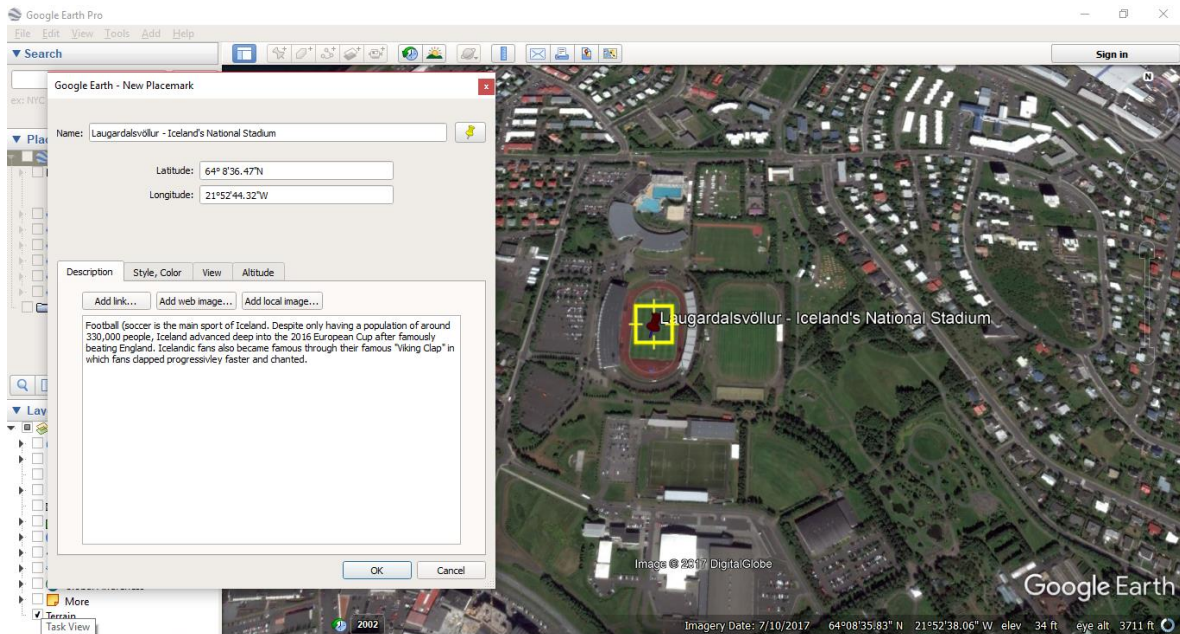
1. Anticipatory Set – Have students use their prior knowledge to define the following terms; Culture, Landscape, and Cultural Landscape. Once students have finished have 2-4 students write their definitions for culture on the board. As a class synthesize the commonalities for the responses. After coming to a common definition of culture, have students work in pairs to come up with 5 cultural traits and then make a master list of them. Choose 5-10 of the traits and have students discuss how the actual traits can be observed around the landscape.  
(5 minutes individual answer time – 25 minutes discussion)
2. Reading the Cultural Landscape of Iceland Activity – Slides begin with definitions of landscape and cultural landscape from Carl Sauer, and then a definition of culture from a human geography textbook. Students can write down or not, but time should be taken to unpack and discuss each of the terms, and compare them to the students’ responses. The purpose of the activity is to show students how the cultural landscape can be “read” and the types of things that can be inferred by looking at the visible impact, or lack thereof, that humans have had on the

landscape. Use the 10 examples (with suggested talking points below) to discuss the cultural landscape, using pictures of Iceland as an example.

(30 minutes)

3. Brainstorming the Cultural Landscape – Using the knowledge they just developed of the cultural landscape, students will need to come up with 10 places that represent the cultural landscape of their own community. Give students time to come up with their ideas, and then create a pin point map using google earth of the places around the community. In google earth pro students can add points of their own to maps by using the 📌 icon along the top bar. Once they are finished they can e-mail their maps to you using the ✉ icon along the top bar. (Example point below)

(20 minutes)



4. Conclusion Question – “The physical area is fundamental to any geographic study because it furnishes the materials out of which man builds his culture”  
- C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, pg. 308  
According to this quote, what type of impact could a changing environment have on the people living in an area? Hypothesize how a changing environment might impact the people of Iceland.

(5 minutes)

Anything that students do not complete in class will need to be completed outside of class

### MODIFICATIONS:

Suggested ways in which the lesson might be modified for specific student audiences, different abilities, etc.

**Pairing** – The assignment is designed so that each student can choose their own partner for activates, or be assigned a partner. Students could be paired based on abilities, or just be paired to lessen the overall workload.

**Resources** – Teacher could furnish examples which students would then have to find using google earth, to speed up the process and help students who may have less knowledge of the area they are trying to do.

**Time** – As needed the project can be lengthened or shortened to accommodate students of different abilities.

### **EXTENSIONS:**

Possible ways to extend this lesson and enhance learning.

Students can present their maps in front of the class, or the assignments can be presented in small groups. Similar activities can be done with other places that students are familiar with, or can research about them and then create web maps using google earth about them.

Students could venture out into their communities and take photos of different sites that they feel represent the cultural landscape of their city or area. Photos can be attached to a google map, or presented to class in a presentation.

### **LEARNING FRAMEWORK:**

Connections between this lesson and the attitudes, skills, and knowledge areas of the Learning Framework.

- **Attitude** – Curiosity: Activity is designed to get students to observe their own surroundings and how to “read” the landscape. Through reading the landscape students will also learn to ask questions about their communities, and better understand their place in it.
- **Skills** – Observe: Students will learn to look at the world as a cultural geographer would, to better understand it based on their ability to read the cultural landscape.
- **Knowledge** – The Human Journey: Through observing the cultural landscape students can gain an appreciation in the ways that humans have made a living across space and time.

### **VOCABULARY:**

New vocabulary students might need in order to learn and complete this lesson.




- **Landscape:** “an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural”
  - C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, Pg. 300
- **Cultural Landscape:** “Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result”
  - C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, Pg. 310
- **Culture:** “A society’s collective beliefs, symbols, values, forms of behaviors, and social organizations, together with its tools, structures, and artifacts created according to the group’s condition of life; transmitted as a heritage to succeeding generations and undergoing adoptions, modifications, and changes in the process”
  - Bjelland, M. (2013), “Human Geography: Landscape” of Human Activities, pg. 478

### **ASSESSMENT:**

Suggested method of assessment for this lesson.

Will vary, but consider grading final project, but doing formative checks along the way.

# Lesson Materials

<p>Recognizing Place</p> <p>Reading the Cultural Landscape of Iceland</p>	<p>Defining Culture</p> <p>“ A society’s collective beliefs, symbols, values, forms of behaviors, and social organizations, together with its tools, structures, and artifacts created according to the group’s condition of life; transmitted as a heritage to succeeding generations and undergoing adoptions, modifications, and changes in the process”</p> <p>- Bjelland, M., <u>Human Geography: Landscape of Human Activities</u>, 2013, pg. 478</p>
<p>Understanding the Cultural Landscape according to Carl Sauer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Landscape: “an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural” – C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, Pg. 300</li><li>• Cultural Landscape: “Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result” – C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, Pg. 310</li></ul>	<p>Picture 1 – Central Reykjavik</p>  <p>Things to point out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bikers in far right</li><li>Tourists to right of sculpture</li><li>Fishermen on left side</li><li>Lack of many tall buildings – most buildings white as well</li><li>Cleanliness – Also trash can on right side picture</li></ul>
<p>Picture 2 – Blue Mountains</p>  <p>Things to point out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Germanic Language</li><li>Bullet holes or some other form of vandalism?</li><li>Winter recreation</li><li>Road is rugged</li></ul>	<p>Picture 3 - Vik</p>  <p>Things to point out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mixture of basic and modern architecture</li><li>Church has position of prominence – Lutheran Church</li><li>New construction on right side</li><li>Tour bus in very top right</li></ul> <p>Things you don’t see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Not a lot of buildings, but actually one of largest cities in Iceland</li><li>Not much agriculture – terrain too rugged</li><li>Very green – no trees!</li></ul>

Picture 4 - Geysir



Things you see:  
Tourists – Mostly European and North American  
Technology

Picture 5 – Heimaey



Things to point out:  
City constrained (actually molded by natural environment)  
Mostly white buildings, lots of red roof tops – homogenous landscape  
Port – Necessity of transportation  
Tourists...again

Picture 6 - Myvatn



Things to Point out:  
Extensive Agriculture – Requires lots of land  
Hay means agriculture is mostly animal based  
Using every possible area for agriculture – agriculture land is limited  
Very green – no trees!

Picture 7 - Flatey



Things to point out:  
Protestantism – Jesus in an Icelandic Sweater  
Fishing community  
Artistic influences

Picture 8 - Flatey



Things to point out:  
Can leave trash out – no land mammals to disturb  
New Construction  
Traditional fishing village – not very lively  
Very green – no trees!

Picture 9 - Husavik



Things to point out:  
Lots of pleasure boats – wealthier country  
Whale watching boats  
Whale hunting boats  
Shipping area in back  
Snow-capped mountains – Tough terrain for agriculture

Picture 10 - Krafla



Things to point out:

Power Plant – geothermal powerplant, uses available resources

No houses, or much else around – very rural

No trees, or agriculture in the area

### Thought Question:

“The physical area is fundamental to any geographic study because it furnishes the materials out of which man builds his culture”

- C. Sauer, (1925) “The Morphology of Landscape” Land and Life, pg. 308

According to this quote, what type of impact could a changing environment have on the people living in an area? Hypothesize how a changing environment might impact the people of Iceland.