

WHAT MAKES A SPACE PUBLIC? HOW CAN PUBLIC SPACE BE CHANGED?



WRITE 4 CHANGE

PROJECT: public space

This project focuses on the ways in which public space can both include and exclude, asking students to re-imagine, re-inscribe, and re-present public space. Students explore inclusive design, think about the difference between public and private spaces, and reflect on the ways in which verbal and visual depictions of public spaces may be able to change them.



#INQUIRE

#MAKE

#ACT

#REFLECT

#INQUIRE

What are public spaces? What makes a space public?

In this stage students research public spaces in their community. Though physical, digital, or archival research, they examine who creates public spaces, who uses them, and for what purposes.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

FIELD RESEARCH OPTIONS:

This activity takes students out of the classroom and into a public space on campus or in their school

- Ask students to spend at least 15 minutes observing a public space and taking field notes on paper.
- Remind them to pay attention to who is (and isn't) using the space and how they are using it
- Students may want to conduct on-site interviews with users of the space to find out how they are using it, why they visit it, and what they might wish to see changed.
- Students can consider their own participation in this space. Does it feel welcoming? Do they feel that the space was created with their needs or desires in mind?
- At what time of day do people use this space?

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH OPTIONS:

This activity allows students to learn more about the history of public spaces that interest them.

- Ask students to choose a public space they are interested in learning more about, such as a park, statue, intersection, or museum in their own community
- Guide students in library, internet, or oral history research about the space.
- Prompt students to uncover the historical creation of the space. Who created it, in what time, and why? What was the socio-historical context of the space when it was created?
- Ask students to think about how the space has changed over time. Ask them to discover how the area around the space has also changed. Have any significant events occurred in the space?
- Ask students to consider the current uses of the space and compare them to the space's original purpose and historical trajectory.

WRITE 4 CHANGE SITE ACTIVITIES:

POST:

- Compile your research notes and images in a WHITEBOARD. Be sure to explain what your public space is and where it is located.
- Post your WHITEBOARD to the ASSET LIBRARY.
- Tag it with #inquire, #publicspaceresearch, and any other relevant hashtags

INTERACT:

- Go to the ASSET LIBRARY and search for #inquire or #publicspaceresearch
- Choose a post to comment on and address the following: Who do you think might use this space? Would you feel welcome in this space? How would this space work differently in your own context?

PROJECT
public
space

#MAKE

What is important to you and your community in a public space?

In this stage, students design a public space for their community. They should consider not only what they want from the space, but also the needs and desires of the broader public with whom they will share it.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A LOCATION:

Your students can design various public spaces depending on your constraints and goals, such as:

- A space in the classroom, school campus, or library
- A space in their neighborhood, community, or town
- A public art installation or public performance space
- An imagined space to be placed in an existing work of fiction or a completely original imagined space
- A re-imagined space from history or an invented space in the future

STEP TWO: CHOOSE A DESIGN:

Students can design a space "from scratch" or re-design an existing space in many ways, such as:

- A description of the space in the form of a report, essay, narrative, or poem
- A visual diagram of the space drawn by hand or with digital tools
- A multidimensional model of the space, such as a diorama, a lego model, or a google sketch-up
- A virtual walk-through of the space built using Prezi, virtual reality tools, or within virtual world systems such as Second Life or Minecraft

WRITE 4 CHANGE SITE ACTIVITIES:

POST:

- Make a WHITEBOARD representing your designed space, including photographs, text, or digital elements as needed.
- Post your WHITEBOARD to the ASSET LIBRARY.
- Tag it with #make #publicspacedesign, and any other relevant hashtags

INTERACT:

- Go to the ASSET LIBRARY and search for #make or #publicspacedesign
- Choose a post to comment on and address the following: Who do you think might use this space? Would you feel welcome in this space? How would this space work differently in your own context?

PROJECT:
public
space

#ACT

What changes are needed in public spaces in your community?
How are these changes made and by whom?

This stage asks students to consider how they can affect change in the public spaces in their community. They should identify the locus of control for public spaces, think about who has agency to make change in public spaces, and explore processes through which change is actionable.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

OPTIONS FOR SPEAKING OUT:

Students can explore change-making through researching the petition process.

- Students should first identify a change they'd like to see in a public space in their community or school
- Students should then determine who is responsible for making these changes, whether it is the park service, the mayor, the principal, the school board, or a teacher.
- With teacher supervision, students can craft a petition, letter, or report and send it to the identified authority, asking for a change or expressing concerns about a space. They can use research from the #inquire stage and proposed designs from the #make stage

OPTIONS FOR MAKING CHANGE:

Students themselves can affect immediate change, with teacher consultation and approval.

- Students may decide to pick up trash in a public space
- Students may create a temporary art installation through chalk to raise awareness of an issue
- With approval, students might plant a garden or a tree
- Students may re-arrange their classroom

WRITE 4 CHANGE SITE ACTIVITIES:

POST:

- Make a WHITEBOARD to show how you attempted to or succeeded in affecting change in a public space. Include #before and #after images, if relevant.
- Post your WHITEBOARD to the ASSET LIBRARY.
- Tag it with #act, #publicspacechange, and any other relevant hashtags

INTERACT:

- Go to the ASSET LIBRARY and search for #act or #publicspacechange
- Choose a post to comment on and address the following: Do you think the space was improved by the change made or requested? How are changes requested or made in public spaces in your context?

PROJECT:
public
space

#REFLECT

How have your roles as a researcher, designer, and change-maker impacted your views of public space and of yourself?

This stage, which should be completed last, asks students to reflect on their own processes, feelings, and growth during the public space project. Although the #inquire, #make, and #act stages may not have been explicitly related to each other or the same public space, this stage asks students to make connections between the three as they relate to the students' own learning and development.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

REFLECTION QUESTION OPTIONS:

Students can reflect on the following questions, individually or as a group.

- What aspects of public space were important to you before you completed your #inquire research?
- What was important to you in designing a public space?
- How were other people's ideas about public space different from your own and why? Did any of your own ideas about public space change?
- How did your #inquire research impact the way you designed your own public space in the #make stage?
- How did you feel about the changes you were able to advocate for and #act out? Were they successful? Why or why not?
- How did other Write 4 Change participants react to your posts? What impact do you think your work had in the Write 4 Change community?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

There are multiple ways students can craft their reflection, such as:

- A structured discussion, either synchronous in the classroom or on an asynchronous discussion board
- A poem, journal, reflective essay, or free-writing assignment
- A diagram, comic strip, or photo essay of their process and growth
- A vlog or audio-recording of themselves or their classmates talking about the discussion questions

WRITE 4 CHANGE SITE ACTIVITIES:

ANALYZE IMPACT:

- Go to the IMPACT STUDIO and look at the data there
- Choose a post to comment on and address the following: How was your process different from the original poster's? How could your own ideas change or expand by learning about their experiences?

POST:

- Post your reflection as video, image, or text in the ASSET LIBRARY. You can post your entire reflection or representational part (for example, if you had a class discussion, you can post a video clip or summary)
- Tag it with #reflect, #publicspacereflect, and any other relevant hashtags

INTERACT:

- Go to the ASSET LIBRARY, search for #reflect or #publicspacereflect, and choose a post to comment on.
- Go to the IMPACT STUDIO and choose an asset that has had a lot of activity. Write a message to its creator about how they made it.

PROJECT:
public
space

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: (click each for more information)

TOOLS AND TUTORIALS:

[Prezi](#)

[Second Life](#)

[Lego Modeling](#)

[Shoebox Dioramas](#)

[Google Sketch-Up](#)

[Minecraft](#)

[VR \(Google Cardboard\)](#)

EXAMPLES AND INSPIRATION:

[Plunger-Protected Bike Lanes](#)

[Reclaiming Public Spaces for Women in Turkey](#)

[Banksy's Graffiti \(video\)](#)

["An Immigrant Alphabet" Public Art Installation](#)

FURTHER READING AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

[Parklets in Philadelphia](#)

[Apple and Public Spaces](#)

[Public Spaces Around the World \(video\)](#)

["The Deaf Body in Public Space" \(essay\)](#)

TEACHER
RESOURCE
DISCUSSION BOARD
(coming soon)

PROJECT:
public
space