

Activities

Dream Town

Written by Michelle Markel, Illustrated by Rick Reese

Introduction

Dream Town relates a grandmother's fanciful account of her childhood spent in the otherworldly city of Los Angeles, where she encountered buildings in the shapes of witches' houses, giants, spaceships, larger-than-life donuts and hotdogs, and much, much more. Children will be delighted by the flight of fancy they take around this world-famous city.

The following activities are meant to extend students' imaginations as they think about their own dream towns, both real and make-believe. Activities are aligned to California state standards and can be modified with slight alterations for students in grades 1 through 3.

Suggested Activities

1. *Design Your Own Dream Town* (Fulfills CA Grade 1 Writing Standard 1.2 and Grade 2 Writing Standard 2.1b) Using *Dream Town* as a guide, students will design a dream town of their own. It can be as fantastic and imaginative as they want, but they can also use their hometown (or a place they are familiar with) as a basis for their dream town. Have them use as many adjectives as possible to describe the place. You might also have them draw a picture describing each detail, or have them make a big poster of their dream town and write a description of it on another sheet of paper.
2. *Explore Your Town* (Fulfills CA Grade 2 Writing Standards 2.1 and 1.6 or Grade 3 Writing Standard 2.2) Have your students document the buildings and places of their hometown. Buy a few disposable cameras and let each child borrow one for a day, allowing them to take six pictures each that document the interesting buildings or places in their neighborhood. After you develop the film, distribute posterboards and have students make collages of their hometown. They can also write brief descriptions to accompany the photos. Model for students how to lay out the artwork and writing BEFORE they glue anything down.
3. *Class Field Trip* (Fulfills CA Grade 2 Writing Standards 2.1 and 1.6, Grade 3 Writing Standard 2.2, and Grade 3 History–Social Science Standard 3.3) Find an interesting historical building or place in your hometown and arrange a tour of it with a docent or find an area in your hometown with many different buildings and take your class on a walking tour. Take pictures to document the trip. Have students write journal entries as they go, describing the buildings and their surroundings.

4. *My Hometown* (Fulfills CA Grade 3 Writing Standard 2.2) Have your students write a story about their hometown using as many descriptive adjectives as possible. Use the different parts of *Dream Town* to guide students' thinking, i.e., have them describe the style of buildings and houses, parades, parks, famous restaurants, interesting people, the natural environment, and any other landmarks a visitor should know about.
5. *Interview and Report* (Fulfills CA Grade 2 Listening and Speaking Standard 2.2, Grade 3 Listening and Speaking Standard 2.3, and CA Grade 3 History–Social Science Standard 3.3) Have students talk to an older relative about what it was like in their hometown when they were growing up. Come up with a list of questions that students could use in the interview. Have each student write a story like *Dream Town*, using the answers from the interview, keeping the name of the town a surprise until the end of their story. Have students present their stories to the class.
6. *Advertising Poster and/or 3-D Model* (Fulfills CA Grade 2 Visual and Performing Arts Standard 2.3 or Grade 3 Visual and Performing Arts Standards 2.3 and 2.5) Have students design, draw, and create their own business buildings in the shape of their products (e.g., a pizza parlor in the shape of a pizza). Students should draw the building on a large piece of paper, adding whatever they'd like to advertise their business. You may want to draw a mock-up of your own beforehand, or brainstorm with students what a building may have on it. To extend the exercise, have students go home and make a 3-D sculpture of the building with whatever materials they have on hand (paper, glue sticks, papier mâché, etc.). Students can then present their businesses to the class.

Credits

Curriculum written by David Gugel for Heyday Kids, November 2005.

We want to hear from you! Heyday Kids appreciates feedback on activities, lesson plans, and discussion guides, and welcomes your own lesson plan ideas. If you would like to get in touch with us, please contact us at heyday@heydaybooks.com.