



HomeStories:

Sharing Your Story of Home and Connecting with Others

This lesson plan is designed for engaging students in HomeStories activities in the classroom. Through HomeStories, students explore the concept of “home” and create their own stories focusing on a place that feels like home. Additionally, students explore the HomeStories interactive map and can read others’ stories of home.

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1. Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the Out of Eden Walk project
- Explore the HomeStories map
- Describe the role of journalism in sharing stories and building community
- Evaluate and discuss a collection of published HomeStories
- Write, edit, and publish their own HomeStory

2. Standards

(Examples from Common Core - any content area can be adapted)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4 & CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5 & CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 7 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

3. Materials:

- Internet access
- Student devices
- Video: [Out of Eden Walk: An Introduction](#)
- [HomeStories Activity Sheet](#)
- [9 Million Chicagos, one Home](#)
- [HomeStories Map](#)
- [HomeStories writing template](#)

4. Introduction to the lesson plan

In this lesson, students will learn about Paul Salopek’s 10-year walking journey across the globe and explore with the global HomeStories map, inspired by Paul’s journey. Students will write and workshop their own HomeStory and upload their composition to the global HomeStories map.

Note for facilitators: Before beginning, please post your own HomeStory so you can use it as a model for students under ‘Explore the Map’ at www.homestoryproject.org

5. Warm up

Students respond to the following question—

What words come to mind when you think of the word “home?”

6. Introducing Out of Eden Walk

Teacher introduces Paul Salopek, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and *National Geographic* Fellow that embarked on a reporting mission in 2013 to walk the same 21,000 mile path that modern humans took from Africa to South America over the course of roughly 50,000 years ago.

Students make a prediction on the following question—

Why do you think he's taking this walk?

Students watch the [Out of Eden Walk: An Introduction](#) and discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. What is the goal(s) of Paul's journey? Why did he embark on this journey?
2. What skills, attitudes, and mindsets help Paul gather stories
3. How is Paul's life like yours? How is it different?
4. Do you think Paul would find stories in *your* community interesting?

7. Introduction to HomeStories

Students read the article "[Nine Million Chicagos, One Home](#)" by Paul Salopek, which introduces and explains the HomeStories map and answer the following questions:

- Paul talks about how the concept of home can be different for everyone. What does home feel like for you? What emotion does it evoke?
- Is there a need to collect stories in your community? Why? What kind of stories might you find?

Students watch [Join us - Create HomeStories](#) OR [read this activity sheet](#).

8. Explore the HomeStories Map - Scavenger Hunt

Students explore the [HomeStories Map](#), an interactive storytelling map where people all over the world can share stories of the place where they feel most at home.

Independently, students look for stories that fit the following criteria:

1. Find a story that surprises you.
2. Find a story that describes a place close to where you live.
3. Find a story about a place you've never been.
4. Find a story that is well written.

Students should share their stories with a partner.

9. Draft, Edit, and Post Personal HomeStories

In small groups, students discuss the following questions used by Paul Salopek:

- a. What place in your community feels most like home (this should not generally be there actual house)? Use list from step 1 to help decide.
- b. Who are you? (what roles do you have, what is your personality like? What are things you care deeply about? How would others describe you?)
- c. Where are you from? (are there interesting things from your past? Did you grow up somewhere different? What was childhood like?)
- d. Where are you going? (what plans do you have? What hopes and dreams do you have?)

Using the [HomeStories template](#), students draft their personal stories. Once they are done writing, students are encouraged to review their work for spelling and grammar errors or share their story with a trusted peer or teacher to review.

Student chooses two photographs to accompany their post:

1. A photo of themselves that will be used as a profile picture. *Students are only requested to include their first name.*
2. A photo of their location. *Students are welcome to draw their location if they prefer.*

Once students are ready to post, they can review the following video tutorial [Posting Your HomeStory](#) and post their story.

10. Reflection

Students review *at least* four HomeStories crafted by their peers and discuss the following:

- What did you learn about a peer that you did not know before after reading their HomeStory?
- Do you see any common themes or trends in our collection of HomeStories?
- What are some differences that you noticed?
- What other questions would you like to ask your peers?
- Has your idea of your own neighborhood or community? If so, how?

11. Extension Activity 1: Collect Community Stories

Students interview at least two family, friends, or community members using the four questions. With their permission, students can draft, edit, and publish their two additional HomeStories.

12. Extension Activity 2: Open Mic

Students can share their stories in a small group or student mic night. Students are welcome to use digital platforms to facilitate the event. Encourage students to establish norms and expectations at the beginning of the readings to ensure that everyone feels comfortable.

Follow Paul on his journey at [National Geographic's Out of Eden Walk](#)

13. More Lesson Plans on Descriptive Writing and Slow Journalism

- [How to Describe Places to Tell Under-Reported Stories: From Drafting to Editing](#)
- [Slow Journalism and the Out of Eden Walk Curriculum](#)
- [1-5 Lesson Plan: A Storyteller's Eye](#)
- [6-8 Lesson Plan: Capturing Emotion in Words](#)
- [9-12 Lesson Plan: A Storyteller's Point of View](#)

14. Opportunities to invite Journalist to your classrooms

The Pulitzer Center offers [free virtual journalist visits](#) to K–12 classrooms worldwide. We work with thousands of journalists like Paul Salopek covering diverse topics and geographic regions. Click here to connect your class with a speaker whose reporting directly supports your teaching.

*Funded by National Geographic