

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## SENSE OF PLACE

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Since 2018, the Anchorage Museum has partnered with schools and organizations to record and collect the dynamic soundscapes of Alaska. This lesson introduces students to the concept of sense of place through the five senses.

### STUDENTS WILL:

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- Discover how to utilize the sense of hearing to make observations of the natural world
- Practice close listening
- Look at the relationship between physical places and human connections to them
- Think critically and support answers with evidence

### MATERIALS

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**STEP 1:** Place cards

**STEP 2 and 3:** To be completed away from a device at the students own listening site. Bring the appendix sheets found at the end of this lesson or write down the appendix questions on another sheet of paper.

### RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL

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Eighth through twelfth  
Adapt for K-12 and adult learners

### KEY TERMS

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**Soundscape:** all the sounds in a particular place

**Soundscape ecology:** the science of studying soundscapes to better understand a place and the relationships between organisms and that place

**Sense of place:** an important feeling people often attribute to particular places which can be difficult to define; this sense is thought to be an understanding of a place and its elements combined with the meaning people give to it and how it may relate to one's own identity

**Identity:** the distinguishing character or personality of an individual or place

**Characteristic:** a feature or quality belonging typically to a person, place, or thing and serving to identify it

**Keynote sound:** Keynote sounds are sounds that are central to a place's soundscape; they are so significant that we hear all other sounds in relation to them; these are the sounds that help shape the identity of a place

### STEPS

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This lesson plan provides three steps and explains each of them in detail on the next page.

**Step 1:** Introduction to Sense of Place

**Step 2:** Sense of Place Wheel

**Step 3:** Sound of Place

**Extension:**

***This lesson plan was created with support from:***



## STEP 1

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### Introduction to Sense of Place - [15 minutes]

In this step, students will break into groups to learn about the concept of sense of place. Complete **Appendix A** to your learning.

## STEP 2

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### Sense of Place Wheel -[15 minutes]

In this step, students will complete a sense of place wheel about a place where they will be observing the sound in step 3. If this lesson plan is done in the classroom, the place of focus should be the school. Print out **Appendix B** for this activity.

## STEP 3

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### Sound of Place -[30 minutes]

In this step, students will select a listening place to identify keynote sounds and examine how those sounds help define that place. Students will complete a sound map of their listening spot. Once they complete the first listening spot, students will create a soundwalk. A soundwalk is a practice of focused listening in which one moves through an environment with complete attention to sound. Encourage students to select key points along their soundwalk that highlight a keynote sound. Students can create a visual aid such as a map to share their soundwalk with others. Complete **Appendix C** to guide learning.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

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### Introduction to Sense of Place - [15 minutes]

This step can be extended by having groups redo the same process with a different place. Have students repeat the initial prompts and then compare and contrast the different key characteristics between places.

### Sense of Place Wheel - [15 minutes]

This step can be extended by students complete another wheel for a place of their choosing.

### Sound of Place - [15 - 20 minutes]

To extend this lesson, students may complete weekly listening sessions at their sound spot. They may compare and contrast their sound maps from each visit to see how their soundscape has changed overtime.

To extend the soundwalk portion of this step students can try out each others soundwalks.

## ADDITIONAL SOUNDSCAPE ACTIVITIES

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To continue learning about soundscape ecology, engage with these Anchorage Museum lessons:

- [Introduction to Sound and Soundscapes](#)
- [Art and Sound](#)
- [Sound Analysis](#)
- [Summer Soundscapes](#)

All Anchorage Museum lessons can be found on the [Educator Resource webpage](#), including more soundscape ecology activities.



# INTRODUCTION TO SENSE OF PLACE

*Identity is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual or place. A characteristic is a feature or quality belonging typically to a person, place, or thing and serving to identify it.*

1. Break students into five groups and give each group a place card. Place card print outs can be found on the following page.

- Home
- New York City
- Denali National Park
- Downtown Anchorage
- Washington

2. Answer the following questions individually about the place card you were given.

- What is your relationship to this place? Have you been there before? If so, what kind of activities do you do in this place?
  
- What are the key characteristics that define this place?
  
- Identify a characteristic for this place for each of the five senses. If you have not been to this place, make a guess based on what you know about this place.
  - Taste
  
  - Touch
  
  - Sight
  
  - Smell
  
  - Sound

3. Come back together as a group and discuss your thoughts to the questions above. Use the following prompts to guide your discussion.

- What were some common characteristics that were identified?
  
- What were some different characteristic that were identified?
  
- Where characteristics shaped by the persons relationship to that place?
  
- As a group select the key characteristics that you think are most important to your place.

4. Share out as a class the key characteristics each group identified for their place.



## INTRODUCTION TO SENSE OF PLACE

*Print place cards out and break students into five groups.*

Home

New York City

Washington,  
DC

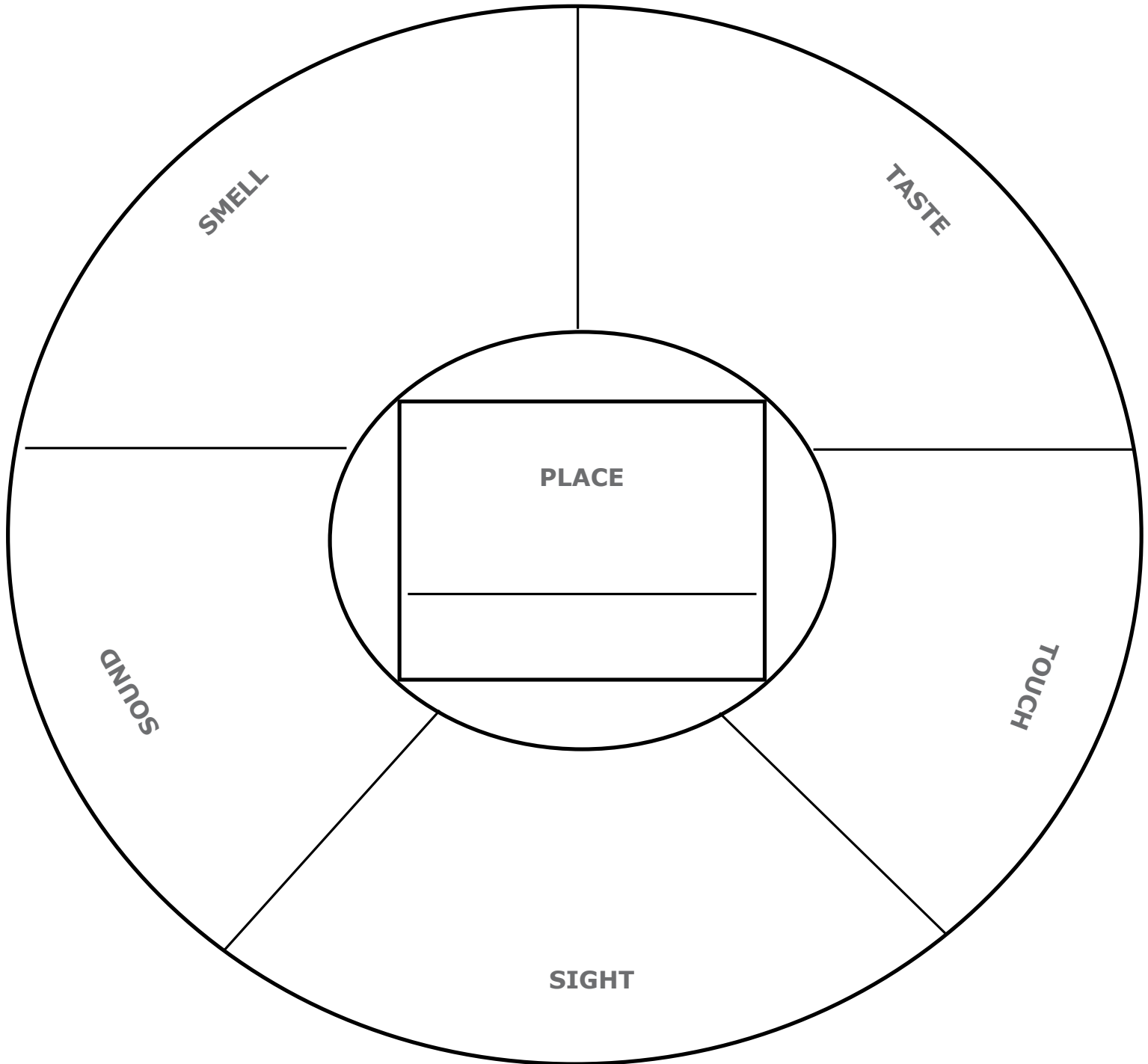
Denali National  
Park

Downtown  
Anchorage

## SENSE OF PLACE WHEEL

*Sense of place is an important feeling people often attribute to particular places but can be difficult to define. It is thought to be an understanding of a place and its elements combined with the meaning people give to it and how it may relate to one's own identity.*

Select a place and complete this wheel by highlighting the key characteristics of that place as they relate to the five senses.





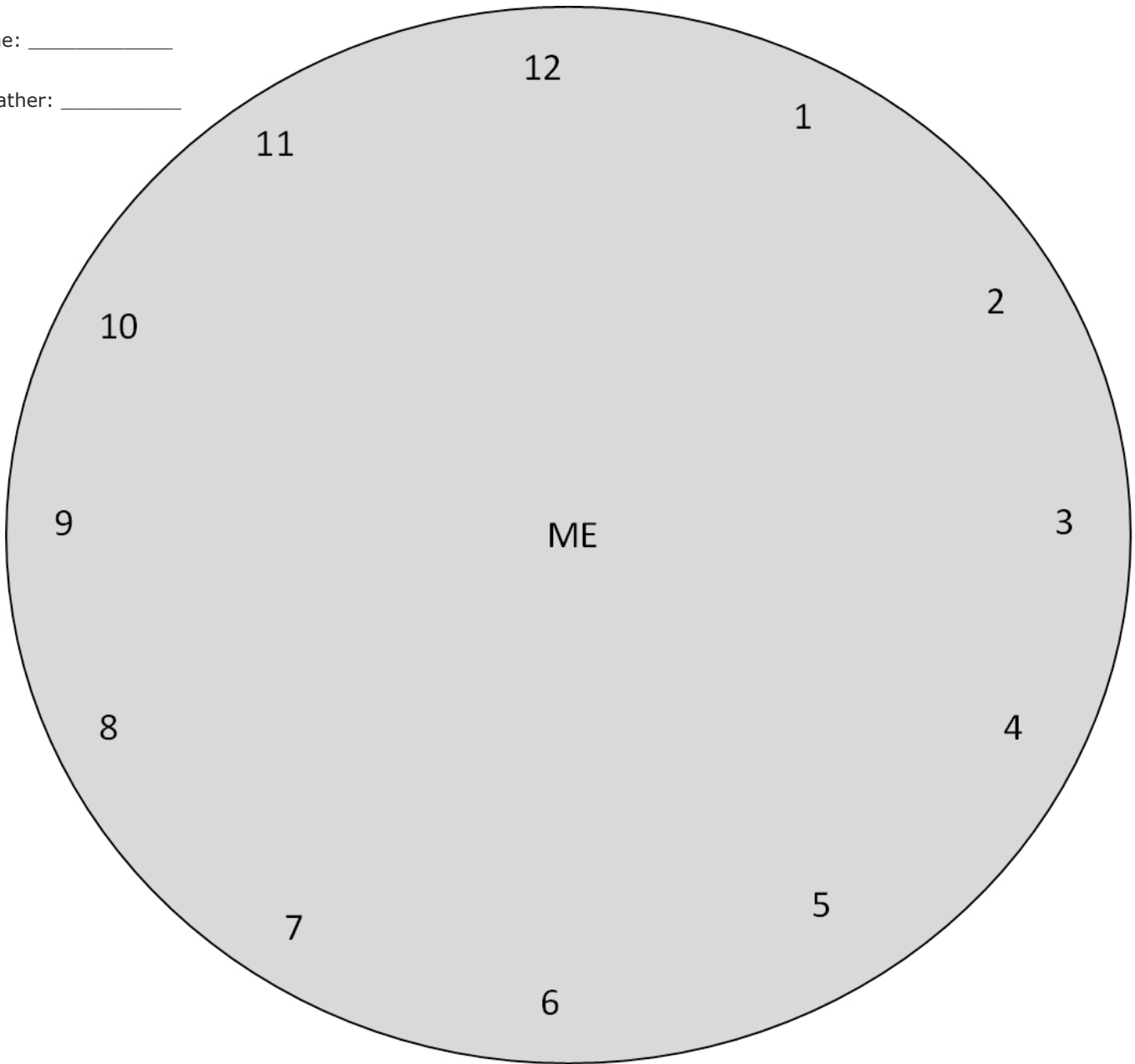
# LISTEN TO OUTDOOR SOUNDSCAPE

My Sound Map

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: \_\_\_\_\_



## SOUND OF PLACE

4. What types of sounds did you hear the most frequently?

5. What sound was the most surprising? Why?

*Keynote sounds are sounds that are central to a place's soundscape. They are so significant that all other sounds are in relation to them. These are the sounds that help shape the identity of a place.*

6. Did you hear any keynote sounds? What about them made you identify them as keynotes?





## SOUND OF PLACE

*A soundwalk is a practice of focused listening in which one moves through an environment with complete attention to sound.*

*Create a soundwalk with your listening spot as the starting point. Pick four additional spots along the way to highlight sounds that help identify the location.*

1. Describe or draw your soundwalk below, giving details about the five spots you selected to highlight along your walk.

*Soundscapes are unique to their time and place; not only do they change when you listen in a new environment, but the exact same environment has different soundscapes at different times. Places sound different throughout the day, in different seasons, and over years and decades.*

