

Activity Guidelines

Earth Pizzas and Mini-villages

Ages 4+

Ready

Making an earth pizza is an easy way for people to understand how the rocks beneath the soil, the bedrocks, give rise to the form, flora and fauna of a landscape. Although there are many different types of bedrock which are made by various geological processes - they can be grouped into three main categories:

1. Sedimentary - formed in layers over time by deposition and accumulation, for example limestone or clay, which may then be tilted, bent and rippled by tectonic processes over time.
2. Metamorphic - sedimentary rocks whose material nature has been changed by immense pressure or heat - for example limestone may become marble, clay may become slate.
3. Igneous rocks - rock made from materials that have been re-constituted and mixed up beneath the earth's crust to form molten magma, before rising back up near to or on the earth's surface.

Every landscape has a distinct character that is created by an often complex mix of natural forces through time. Some Aboriginal Australian people call this The Dreaming, the story of how the landscape came to be - and I like that term because for me it helps me understand that we cannot really know exactly what happened in the past, but are awake now for a geological moment, to be part of the ongoing story. We have a chance to look around and do our best to understand what has happened in the past, to contribute to the present landscape, and to be part of the dreaming a future-scape with our everyday actions. Many cultures from around the world say we humans are part of the land, or that we do not own the land, it owns us - I like that perspective too.

I love this activity of making a mini landscape and then, extending the activity, making a mini village or landscape with humans in it because it gives the makers the chance to be part of the creation story, the dreaming of a landscape for a moment. There is also an opportunity to frame the activity in many ways. For example:

- Do you want this activity to be purely about geology?
- Could you prescribe a series of different mini landscapes (rocky coast, moor, arable farmland, estuary etc) and then place them on a land art map/outline of your county?
- Is it more about making "pizzas" and having fun playing at design and cooking?
- Is it about understanding land use and why a certain soil/aspect/weather combination lends itself to that land use?
- Do you want to focus on the human element of how humans have changed the landscape?
- Can you use a watering can or blow drier to help show the effects of weathering?
- How will you return the elements of the mini landscape to the ground?
- Do you know that in a tablespoon of healthy soil there are more living organisms than there are people on the planet? How could you use this activity to help students appreciate the importance of soils to the health of watercourses, crops or even the planet?
- Is the activity more about making a landscape within which to enact a fairy tale?
- Or dreaming up ideas of a possible place to live for your grandchildren?

Get set

I use tin or plastic plates or shallow bowls for this activity. You can also use flapjack trays or something similar. Paper plates are too floppy. Depending on what is available in the locality I may need to bring in different types of "bedrock" - as having a variety of stone sizes from sand to gravel

larger rocks automatically gives rise to different landscapes. I will need to look around for access to suitable soil or earth to put on top of the rocks and for topping material of leaves, flowers etc, and provide some if there is none available.

Go

“Today we are going to make earth pizzas. Earth pizzas are a way of understanding what is “understanding” the ground we walk on.”

I look inquisitively around to see if anyone gets my play with words...

“Under our feet, under this soil (or tarmac!) there are rocks which we made a long time ago.

Different rock give rise to different types of landscape. We can pretend to make a landscape on a plate by putting some rocks on the bottom layer like the dough of a pizza. Spread them out, or not depending on what kind of shape of landscape you want to make.

The next layer, like the tomato sauce, is the soil”

I sprinkle a layer of soil over the top.

“And then comes the topping - the plants! We can make any kind of pizzas we like!”

I then split up the group into suitable groups send them off to make their own pizzas and give them ten to fifteen minutes to do so before gathering them in for the sharing.



“So, what have you created?”

During the sharing I ask open and leading questions, hoping to reveal the learning, creativity and observations the students have made about their pizzas while they made them.

Sometimes there is wildlife on the pizza! When we are finished I ask the group to carefully put their ingredients back....

Or we extend the activity into making a mini village.

“Humans now live in almost every different landscape in the world. For most of their time as humans, people have lived in small groups, roaming the landscape. Only in the last 10000 years have they started settling in one place, and today more than half of the human population lives in towns and cities. Humans seem to love building more and more things!”

“Using this air drying clay to help make mini farms, villages or towns. You can make mini animals, people and buildings, roads...”

Sometimes I will provide materials - gravel, slate pieces, sticks, wire, blue wool....and see what they all get used for.



I like to make time to gather as a circle and let each other see and hear about the human element added to the landscapes. There is plenty of opportunity to ask questions such as:

- What has been made?
- Would you live there?
- What do you appreciate in this model?
- Where are the materials from?
- How might they be transported in the everyday world and what impacts that might have on the local landscape?
- What kinds of buildings look best in a landscape?
- What happens to the wildlife when we make a village?
- What fuel do people use?
- Does it matter how developments happen on the land?
- Does it matter if all the land is build on?

The mini landscapes can be kept for a display or returned to the earth when they are finished with.

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