***Spirit* Lesson Plan for Year 9 Geography**

Written by Jane Dyson & Shu Jun Lee

Subject: Geography	**Year level: 9**
Topic: Geographies of Interconnection	**Time required: 90 mins**

Lesson summary

Students will watch the film *Spirit* and participate in a role play that would encourage them to reflect on various perspectives on place/Land.

Curriculum links

Perceptions people have of place, and how these influence their connections to different places (VCGGK139)

Learning objectives

Knowledge

Students will be able to:

- describe the factors that influence people's perceptions of place/Land
- consider how people in places in other countries perceive, use and are connected to their place and space
- reflect on diverse perceptions of place/Land

Skills

Students will develop skills of

- communicating with peers
- empathising with people from different cultures

Values

Students will be able to

- respect diverse opinions and ideas
- reflect on their own assumptions and perceptions of place/Land

Resources required

Spirit video (including transcript for students who may benefit from access to the written text)

Lesson Outline		
Teacher guidelines	**Student activity**	**Timing**
Introduction Teachers may use a photograph of a place familiar to students as a trigger activity. Teacher asks students to brainstorm factors that may influence our perception of place e.g. age, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, class, values, time, events. Teacher introduces the film and provides some background information on the place where the film is set: the Garhwal Himalaya village in the Indian state of Uttarakhand.	Students lists the factors that may influence our perception of place. (optional) Students locate the Indian state of Uttarakhand using Google Maps or Google Earth, and describe their observations of the location.	10 mins
Development Teacher introduces the role play task and assigns and explains the roles. Teacher shows the film *Spirit* (approx. 20 minutes). Teacher gets students to discuss how their characters 'see' the village and the factors influencing their perception of the village. Teacher guides students to imagine how the characters may envision the future of the village. Teacher assumes the role of the village leader (*pradhan*) and facilitates the discussion at the village gathering. Teacher may use the hot-seat strategy or any other role-play strategies.	Students pay particular attention to their assigned characters in the film. Students work in groups to discuss the perceptions of their assigned characters. Students assume their roles; characters take turns to sit on the hot seat to be interviewed by the rest of the class.	20 mins 15 mins 30 mins
Conclusion and reflection Teacher debriefs the activity and guides students to reflect on diverse perceptions of place/land and how we can respect and empathise with these diverse views. Teacher can also extend the discussion to include how the First Nations people in Australia perceive Country.		15 mins

Role Play Activity

Background information

The village in which this film is set if located in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, in the Garhwal Himalayas. Over the past two decades the once highly remote village has seen many changes. The inflow of state funds has led to the development of infrastructure including a road, electricity and telecommunications, and schools. The Indian government's push for free and compulsory education since 2009 has enabled the younger generation to receive basic education, providing new possibilities in the village beyond subsistence agriculture. Nevertheless, young people are increasingly leaving the area to access even better educational and employment opportunities in the cities. But leaving one's home is a difficult decision and often taken reluctantly. Many young people eventually return to the village with renewed commitment to the village, and its development.

Despite new opportunities for education and growing rates of outmigration, villagers still prioritise their connection to their community, to the land on which they live, and to the many thousands of Hindu gods who are also said to inhabit the mountains. The cultural and spiritual practices in the village celebrate these interconnections across the physical, social and cultural/spiritual realms. The film culminates in the exuberant *Pandav Lila* - a ten-day festival that celebrates the gods and draws people back to the village. The festival illustrates how the wellbeing of the land and the spirits is perceived to be closely connected to the wellbeing of the villagers and their animals. In this respect, villagers share similar perspectives to Australia's First Nations people and their connection to Country. The villagers in the film acknowledge that this interconnectedness is something that those outside of the village may not experience or understand.

The roles

Each group of students will represent one of the following characters/groups of people:

Saraswati Saraswati is the main character in the film Spirit. When she married her husband, she moved to the village as an unusually well-educated young woman. However Saraswati worked hard like the other women in the village. She also had children who have since left the village for education elsewhere. Although she now works at a school, Saraswati continues to share the work on the land with the other women. While she feels sad that she has not achieved as much as she would like in her life, she now feels at home and connected to the village and the land.	***The older ladies*** All their lives, the older generation has worked hard, living off the land, and maintaining the connections between the physical, spiritual and cultural realms in the village. They are somewhat sceptical of younger generations with their 'newfangled' ideas and who they perceive to scorn hard work. They fear that young people will leave the village, and worry about the implications of outmigration for the economic, social and spiritual life of the village.
Saraswati's children	***Dancers in the Pandav Lila***

Saraswati's children were born in the village but they moved away when they were young to find a better education. They come home occasionally to visit and participate in festivals including the Pandav Lila.	The Pandav Lila is conducted to ask the gods to protect the cows and other livestock in the village. During the festival, the dancers are spontaneously possessed by the gods and goddesses. The whole village gathers to help organise and participate in the festival. The exuberant performances last from dusk to dawn. At the end of the 10 days, even as the dancers go back to their normal lives, the spirit which they embodied and displayed remains high.
State government officials The state of Uttarakhand, in north India was previously part of the state of Uttar Pradesh until 2000, when it achieved status as a separate state. Since then, it has become one of the fastest developing states. Agriculture remains one of the state's key industries. Tourism, manufacturing and other industries are also growing. The state continues to look out for opportunities in the various districts for economic development.	***Tourists from Australia*** Uttarakhand offers many natural and cultural attractions with spiritual significance. Tourists visiting the Garhwal Himalaya can enjoy mesmerising views of the snow-capped Himalayas, visit key Hindu pilgrimage sites and learn from the multiple religious and cultural festivals.

The task

In your assigned groups, after viewing the film, think and discuss:

- How does your assigned character 'see' the village?
- Which factor is the most influential in influencing this character's perception of the village?
- What might your assigned character want for the future of the village?
- What might the other characters want for the future of the village? How will your character respond to these perspectives?

The role play scenario

- There is a village gathering today for everyone to discuss the future of the village.
- Each character is hot-seated for 5 minutes. The characters take turns to sit on the hot seat to be interviewed by the rest of the class.
- The entire discussion will be facilitated by the village leader (the teacher).

Additional information

- Official website on *Spirit* with further information https://www.spiritdocumentary.com/
- Using role play and drama in lessons, Literacy Teaching Toolkit by Victoria Department of Education and Training https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/speakinglistening/Pages/exampleroleplay.aspx

- Additional film from the same village – *Lifelines* (16 minute version and 10 minute version) – and associated lessons plans available at: www.lifelinesfilm.com/resources
- Further film – *Home* (8 minutes) - and associated lesson plan available at: www.spiritdocumentary.com/otherfilms and www.spiritdocumentary.com/resources