

## ***Let's Go West* – Beneath Our Feet**



When John Muir travelled in the ox cart to Wisconsin it 'felt as bumpy as the ship on a stormy sea' as they crossed 'swamps and trackless hills' until they saw their hut in a 'sunny wood, overlooking a flowery glacier meadow and a glimmering lake'.

The aim of this activity is to explore, discover and observe not only what the landscape is around your school but also to find out what the actual rocks are, beneath your feet!

Before you begin, look through the John Muir graphic novel and select some sections that describe the landscape that John finds himself in – similar to the quote above.

Then go outside and select an area within your school ground which you will discover and explore in more detail. Take some paper and a pencil with you.

Begin by writing a sentence that describes the landscape around your school in a similar way to how landscape is referred to in the John Muir graphic novel. Then create an annotated map of an area in your school grounds. Write down, draw or use symbols to represent what you see, and include the following:

- a. Plants
- b. Trees
- c. Insects
- d. Birds

## John Muir, Earth-Planet, Universe: Pupil Activity Support Notes

Once you are back in the classroom (or as a homework exercise) add onto your map the following:

- e. The geology/rock 'beneath your feet'
- f. The names of the trees or plants you included on your map
- g. The names of any insects you discovered in your chosen area
- h. The names of any birds you saw or heard

To help you complete these tasks use the following web links:

- a. To discover the type of rock your school is built on go to:

[www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone/fossils/history/map.htm](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone/fossils/history/map.htm)

This web link shows a map of Britain, and each colour on the map represents rock of a certain age or type. Click on the name of the town or city closest to where you live and discover the age of the rock and types of fossils that could be found there. Then note down your findings on your map.

- b. To discover the types of trees you observed in your school grounds go to:

[www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/british-natural-history/urban-tree-survey/identify-trees/tree-key/index.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/british-natural-history/urban-tree-survey/identify-trees/tree-key/index.html)

Then add the names to your map with drawings showing the key things that helped you to identify the trees and anything else you found out about them.

- c. To find out the names of any insects you came across in your school grounds go to:

[www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone/insects/instant/index.htm](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone/insects/instant/index.htm)

Once you have identified them add these findings to your map.

- d. To find out more or to identify any birds you discovered in your school grounds go to:

[www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdidentifier](http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdidentifier)



## John Muir, Earth-Planet, Universe: Pupil Activity Support Notes

Add your findings to your map as well as drawings and notes about the birds that you have discovered live in or near your school grounds.

### Useful resources

For more ideas and activities to use with this section of the John Muir story go to:

Oxford University Museum of Natural History: [www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone](http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone)

British Geological Survey/Discovering geology:  
[www.bgs.ac.uk/DiscoveringGeology](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/DiscoveringGeology)