

'My treasured city spot': an outdoor game for family and friends

Stimulus question

Do you like riddles?
Is there a spot in the city that is closest to your heart?
Who would you like to show it to?

Overview

'My treasured city spot' is an outdoor game for those who, for various reasons, are unable to meet each other in person. Based on the idea of treasure hunts, quests and urban games, it is a way to bridge the gap between friends and explore the city together using new technologies.

No. of participants

Any number of participants who enjoy puzzles and walks, and can operate a smartphone/camera/voice recorder/computer. The recommended age is 9+. It is advisable for the youngest participants to be accompanied by an adult during field trips.

Time

About 3 hours for preparation and field activities, and another 3 hours for developing materials (maps, texts) and preparing the trail. The project can also be done in the classroom (create a mystery trail e.g. for another class) in which case it is advisable to allocate about 2 meetings for fieldwork and another 2 for work with the materials.

Location

The activity involves both outdoor and indoor work. The project can be held at home, school, clubroom, community centre, library or any other suitable place with access to computers and the Internet.

Resources and equipment

- camera, phone or smartphone with camera, voice recorder, and data cable to transfer data to a computer,
 - compass or GPS tracker (often available on smartphones) – optional,
 - notepad and pen,
 - map (printed or online)
 - computer with internet access,
 - CD/memory stick – optional,
 - tons of imagination :)
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How to go about it? Preparation

1. Think of your favourite city spot. This is where you will guide the player. Hide a little item there as a way for them to remember the journey, such as a written memory, or a note explaining why this place is special to you. It could be a park where you love cycling, a café with your favourite ice cream, or the school where you both met. Share your fave city treasure.
2. Decide who the player is going to be. Who do you want to get involved? Before you get the hang of the game, start by creating a trail that is not too long.
3. Think about the clues to guide the player to your treasured spot. You can:
 - prepare a map (use e.g. Google maps, and choose the desired part of the city),
 - record a podcast to guide the player with your own voice,

- create clues in the form of archival photos available for download from the online map/archive 'Bringing Architecture Closer to You': www.abc.tychy.pl/en
 - create a versed quest text with clues and riddles.
4. Prepare a notebook and pen, a printed map, a camera or a camera-enabled phone, a voice recorder, a compass or a GPS device. Preferably, the route should start from a location that is familiar to the player, e.g. their home. You can narrate the way to your destination, and record the story on a voice recorder while walking.
 5. Take photos during your walk. It can be much trickier to recognise a place if you only reveal its detail, although there will be some locations where the detail will tell you a lot. Look for hiding places along the way (preferably sheltered from the wind and rain and out of animals' reach). Hide clues in containers: jars, bottles or bags. It is important that the clues can be left unattended safely, as the game is all about the player finding their own way at a time that convenient to them.
 6. Use different units of measure: a number of steps, approximate distance in metres, geographical directions, street names, building names, etc. (example: now turn right and walk ten steps)/walk forward for about 2 metres and you will come across.../now turn north-east and you will see the City Hall on your right...). Sounds can also provide interesting clues: the rumble of trains, the sound of water, the ringing of bells can all help to identify the player's location. As you walk, mark important landmarks on the map.
 7. When you get home, upload the audio/video files and the photographs to your computer. Organise and edit your notes. Decide how you ultimately want to guide the player to your treasured spot. Is it going to be a map, a podcast, a versed riddle, or perhaps a combination of these? Send the finished package (instructions, clues, riddles, map or trail in audio/video version) to friends or loved ones by email or through an online utility that allows larger files to be sent (such as WeTransfer). You can also put in the player's letterbox (having recorded your material on a CD or memory stick). Make sure you ask the player to share their impressions with you, and maybe also to send you a photo of the spot as a proof of having found it.

Useful links

- online map/archive 'Bringing Architecture Closer to You': www.abc.tychy.pl/en
- sample quests: <http://bestquest.pl/>; <https://questy.org.pl/>
- WeTransfer: <https://wetransfer.com/>
- Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Please share with us your experiences and impressions of preparing the game. Show off your treasured city spot by tagging us on social media: FB @MuzeumMiejskieTychach / Instagram: @mmtychy or by sending an email to a.kura@muzeum.tychy.pl