Teaching Ideas for an Inflatable Globe

From Simon Catling (With contributions from the GA's Early Years and Primary Phase Committee and Secondary Phase Committee)

1. **Globe Tossing**
   Children toss or pass (gently) an inflatable globe from one to another. Each child has to find a place or feature named by the person tossing/passing the ball and then name a place or feature on the globe for the next person to locate. This can be a useful 'settling' activity when children return from playtimes with children joining in as they come into class. They might be confined initially to places named on the globe but this might be extended as they become more knowledgeable and experienced. The focus for young children can be on continents and islands and oceans/major seas.

   Throw the globe to a student. They look at the location under their left thumb when they catch it and have to come up with three clues (on the globe) e.g. neighbouring countries, continent, major river, cities etc. for the rest of the class. The person who guesses correctly then gets passed the globe.

2. **Great Circles**
   Use string to compare the distances in travelling around the world. Choose two locations and place the string from the departure to the destination locations following longitudinal or latitudinal directions. Mark the distance on the string with a felt pen. Then stretch the string to find the shortest route, which may be a 'great circle' via the poles. Discuss why this is.

3. **Be Gentle with the Earth**
   Use the inflatable globe to introduce discussions about how to care for the Earth. Start with how to look after the inflatable globe because it needs to be handled carefully, kept inflated, not pricked, etc. Use this as a metaphor for environmental concern, care and responsibility. Draw out what the children 'know', challenge any misconceptions and extend their understanding of environmental responsibility. Discuss the fragility of the Earth and changes that are occurring to it, such as climate change.

4. **Spin the Globe/Roll-a-Globe**
   With a group of children spin an inflatable globe on the table or floor. Name a child to identify one of the places or features that is facing them when the globe stops spinning. A variant is to have the children sit in a circle on the floor. One child rolls the globe across to another. That child says which feature of place is uppermost on the globe when it reaches them.

5. **Where in the World?**
   Name particular features and/or places for child to find and point to on the inflatable globe. The child then passes the globe to the person sitting next to them; either the teacher repeats the task or another chosen child asks the holder of the globe to point to a new feature or place.

6. **Spot the Biggest/Smallest/etc**
   Use the globe with a group to look for 'large' and 'small' features. Children can be asked to find the largest continent or ocean, to find the smallest of four named islands, countries bigger or smaller than another country, the longest mountain range or river or the largest lake or inland sea. They can set each other features and places to find.
7. **Where we have been**
   Use the inflatable globe to locate places that children have been to in the World on holiday. Children note the country and area of the World. This might be an informal geography activity or a task in a project on 'Places we have been to'. And can be extended to include 'Places where we have connections'.

8. **Atlas Connections**
   Use an atlas with the inflatable globe to find features and places on both. Globes often do not have as many places named on them as an atlas will have named in its pages. Children may look up a place or feature in the atlas and find it on the globe. They can discuss the similarities and differences between the globe and the atlas as representations of the Earth, what is shown and why, how these features and places are shown, and where distortions in the shapes of features are and why (from the nature of making a flat map from a globe to the generalisation of the shapes of coastlines, etc.).

9. **Where I would like to go**
   If children had the chance to travel anywhere in the World, where are the places they would visit? Use the inflatable globe to support discussion among a group of children or the whole class about places they want to visit. Have them explain why. If they have limited ideas about where and why – or even misconceived ideas – challenge the children to find out about that or another place and report back in a later lesson.

10. **In the News**
    Have children listen to or watch news broadcasts or look up news information via the TV or newspaper websites. Encourage them to identify where the events mentioned in the news occurred. They might check locations at home or in school on an atlas; then have them show where these places are on the globe and outline what the news item was and why it interested them.

11. **Pass it round**
    This is a variant on the game of 'Whispers'. Have children sit in a circle in a large group or as a whole class. Whisper to the first child the name of a place or feature which you point out to the child on the inflatable globe. That child whispers and points to the same feature/location to the child next to them. This continues around the group/class until it comes back and is whispered/pointed out to the teacher. Is it still the same feature/location? Discuss what has happened and why, and how easy it is to mishear and pass on mistaken information! Consider how this might relate to hearing misinformation about places, events and people in the news.

12. **Create an atlas**
    Ask a team of children to create an atlas of their features and places they select from an inflatable globe that they are given. It may be helpful to provide them with blank copies of maps of the continents. They need to decide which features and places to include, which maps to include and add, the order to put the pages of their atlas in, how to produce a contents page and an index. They will need to think about the types of features/places, such as mountains, rivers, capitals, other cities, country boundaries, and so forth.

13. **Hot or cold?**
    With the lights off and a torch you can illustrate the differences in the area heated up by the sun's rays to show why the poles are cooler than the equator.

14. **Drawing on the globe**
    Use a whiteboard pen to draw on the globe, ask the students to locate case studies, travel routes, physical features etc. This could be done as a group challenge with each group having a globe and list of things to locate.
15. **Hot-seating**

Get the class to stand in a circle and to pass the globe between them. As soon as they receive the globe they have to say a key word or associated word from the lesson. If they can’t come up with one, they are out and have to sit down. The globe can be used for hot seating, the student with the globe talks, this can be used for feedback, debriefing. The globe can be used when asking questions, throw the globe to a student and they get asked a question.

16. **Changing globe**

Ask the students how the globe may change? Is this globe up to date? Students may notice that some of the cities in India have not got their current names; Bombay is known as Mumbai, Madras is known as Chennai and Bangalore is now Bengaluru. Students may suggest that country boundaries may change and new countries created such as Macedonia. Of course over millions of years due to the movement of plates the continents have drifted. On a globe it is easy to see how once Africa and South America fitted together.

More ideas can be found or adapted from those in Simon Catling (2002), *Placing Places*, Sheffield: Geographical Association (3rd edition).

Have you got further ideas for using inflatable globes? Why not join the Primary Champions Ning and share some ideas. http://geographychampions.ning.com.

*September 2010*

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**For more about maps and globes**

Go to our website www.geography.org.uk

GA members have access to base maps to download and use with students www.geography.org.uk/resources/basemaps/

There is a section on mapping our globe www.geography.org.uk/resources/mappingourglobe/

There are two think pieces on 'Making and Using Maps' and 'Using Maps & Atlases' www.geography.org.uk/gtip/thinkpieces/

Go to our shop www.geography.org.uk/shop

We sell inflatable globes and a range of atlases for Key stage 2 to Key stage 5 from Collins and Longman.

*Placing Places* (Simon Catling, 2002) includes 250 ways to help children build up a mental map of the Earth.

*Maps with Latitude* (David R Wright, 2000) discusses approaches to studying our globe and selecting and using world maps.