

## NATURAL RESOURCES

## Activity NR08

### Theme

Class activity (CA). Students choose a local building, possibly the school itself, and carry out a survey to identify the materials used in construction.

### Objectives

Encouraging students to think about buildings as an element of their environment and about the origins of building materials as natural resources.

### Curricular strands

SESE, History—Buildings; Sites or ruins in my locality

SESE, Geography—Human environments; Settlement, homes and other buildings

SESE, Science and Geography—Environmental awareness and care

### Skills

Observing, questioning, analysing, estimating and measuring, recording and communicating, evaluating, a sense of place, maps and globes

### Time

20-30 minute introductory discussion; 30-60 minutes conducting the survey depending on site and level of detail of survey. Additional time can be spent on presenting results or follow on activities.

# Straw, sticks or bricks?

## → SURVEYING LOCAL BUILDINGS

### WHAT YOU NEED

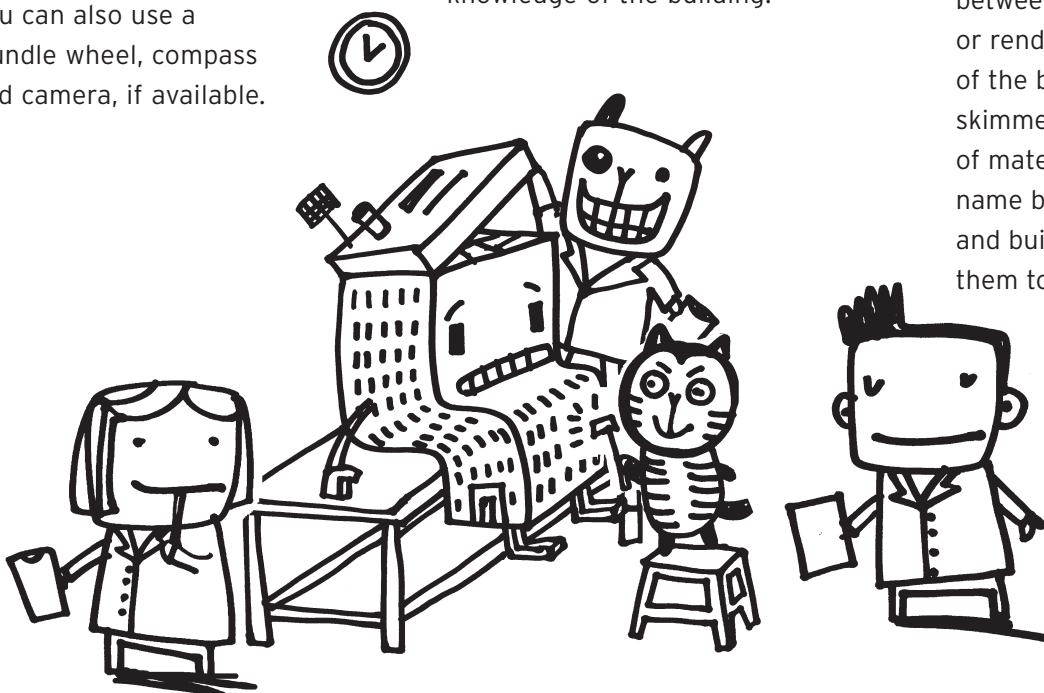
- Survey sheet attached
- Clipboards
- Sketch pad
- Note book and colouring pencils
- Chunky crayons
- Local map
- Plastic bag to protect paper from rain

You can also use a trundle wheel, compass and camera, if available.

**Note:** When picking buildings to survey choose sites that have safe pedestrian access and a safe route from your school. If necessary, contact the occupants in advance for permission to conduct a survey and to arrange a suitable time to visit. This may present opportunities for students to interview someone with knowledge of the building.

### WHAT YOU DO

- 1 Have a discussion with your class about the buildings in your area. Think of an old building and a new building. What are the buildings used for? The survey will investigate materials used in the building so discuss the materials listed to ensure that students can differentiate between stone, brick, cement, or rendering (when the surface of the building is plastered or skimmed over). Discuss textures of materials and ask students to name buildings that look well and buildings that don't. Ask them to explain their answers.



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- 2** Tell the class that you are going to conduct a survey of a local building. You may choose to survey the school building as a practice exercise and then arrange to visit a local church, the library, a house, an office, civic building or shop.
- 3** Divide the class into groups and ask them to identify the building on the local map.
- 4** An optional additional activity would be a visit to the local library to research the building and see if any information, old maps or photos are available.
- 5** During the survey students can extend their investigation by using a trundle wheel to measure aspects of the building, construct a plan view and use a compass to add the cardinal points. Using a camera to record their findings can enhance presentation of results but is not necessary.
- 6** Ask each group to report on their findings and discuss.

### Go further

Older classes could survey two very different buildings, for example an old church and a modern office or public building, and compare the two.

If the materials in the building you surveyed have a strong local connection, students could find out more about where the materials come from, for example a locally quarried stone. You could invite a local heritage specialist in to talk about buildings in your area. The Heritage in Schools scheme at INTO provides a directory of specialists at [www.into.ie/html/development/her\\_directory.htm](http://www.into.ie/html/development/her_directory.htm) and facilitates booking of visits. Students could devise a trail around the building (see Caring for the Environment Activity 4).

This activity could tie in to the local map-making exercises in the Caring for the Environment Pack on this website. Studied buildings could be marked or illustrated on the maps, and a survey of buildings could become part of the mapping exercise.

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### BUILDING SURVEY

#### YOU WILL NEED

- Survey sheet
- Clipboards
- Sketch pad
- Note book and colouring pencils
- Chunky crayons
- Local map
- Plastic bag to protect paper from rain

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time** \_\_\_\_\_

**Surveyor's name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of building** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year it was built** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Has it been renovated or extended since then? Write details in your note book. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the building used for? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Was the building always used for this purpose? If not what was it used for before? \_\_\_\_\_

| Material | Yes or No | Texture<br>(rough, smooth,<br>bumpy, warm, cold) | Colour<br>(write the colour and try<br>to draw an example with<br>colouring pencils) | Where is the<br>material used?<br>(walls, door,<br>decorative features?) |
|----------|-----------|--|--|--|
| Wood     |           |  |  |  |
| Metal    |           |  |  |  |
| Glass    |           |  |  |  |
| Brick    |           |  |  |  |
| Stone    |           |  |  |  |
| Cement   |           |  |  |  |

4. Make a sketch of the building in your sketch pad and label the entrance and any interesting features.

5. Make crayon rubbings on paper of the textures of the building materials. Write where they were taken and the date.

6. Make rubbings of patterns or designs on the building or on metal shore covers, name plates, railings or in the grounds. Write where they were taken and the date.

7. Think of five words that best describe the building (e.g. tall, old, modern, bright, ugly, impressive)

8. What feature of the building do you like the most and which do you like the least?

9. Is the building in good condition?

10. What are the two buildings closest to this one?

11. Do they look similar or different to your building? Explain why.