

Design your own rocky play-park Telling the stories of rocks for everyone

If you wanted to design your own rocky play park for the area where you live, to help local people to become more interested in rocks and the stories they can tell – and you had:

- as much money as you needed;
- a suitable site;
- local people keen on the idea;
- the help of the quarrying industry (to give you the rocks) and
- lots of imagination ...

.... what would you design?

Remember that your design will need to be:

- safe for all ages of children (and adults) to play on;
- long-lasting, so it will last for many years without needing too much up-keep;
- really interesting – to help people to understand more about rocks, fossils and the Earth.

An idea to help you is shown opposite.



Painting by John Ayers to illustrate ideas for Box Rock Circus, Wiltshire. The picture was used in all publicity and fund-raising material for the project.

When you have designed your play-park, you will need to present your ideas to the public. This could be by:

- a drawing like the one above;
- a plan (a view seen from above);
- a model;
- a website ...

... you decide ... and then present your ideas in the best ways possible.

The back up

Title: Design your own rocky play-park.

Subtitle: Telling the stories of rocks for everyone.

Topic: Asking pupils to design a geology-based attraction for the public.

Age range of pupils: 5-16 years

Time needed to complete activity: 30 minutes or longer

Pupil learning outcomes: Pupils can:

- describe aspects of geology that they find interesting;
- design an imaginative and educational attraction for the public including these ideas;
- prepare a presentation of their design to present to the public.

Context:

This is a 'real' activity, since a play-park like this has actually been devised, planned, funded and built and is now a local visitor attraction. You can find details of the Rock Circus in Box village in Wiltshire, UK, at the website: <http://www.boxrockcircus.org.uk/>



Box Rock Circus. (Elizabeth Devon).

The Box Rock Circus website contains a photo gallery of the rock circus being built and lots of background material, including descriptions of each of the installations and the interpretation board and publicity leaflets. There are also details of the funding acquired and teaching ideas for the site. In fact, there is all you need not only to encourage your own pupils to design a rocky play park, but also to carry forward one of their own designs and have a new rocky play area built in or near your school!

Other ideas that could be used as useful prompts for your pupils are the drawing of a possible play park idea for a school in the city of Bath and the geological gardens of the Stone Spiral in Sheffield General Cemetery (with its geological trail leaflet), at Ramat Hasharon in Israel and at the Southern Connecticut State University in the USA.



Drawing for a possible school play park in Bath, UK. (Joy Lawley).



The Stone Spiral at Sheffield General Cemetery, Sheffield, UK (Peter Kennett).



Geological garden, Ramat Hasharon, Israel.

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Academic Science and Laboratory building geological garden, Southern Connecticut State University, USA.

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Following up the activity:

The best way to follow up the activity is to carry the project forward!

Try putting 'geological garden' into a search engine like Google™ to find other examples to use as prompts for pupils.

Underlying principles:

- Pupils have the opportunity to consider the aspects of geology they find most interesting and exciting.
- They then have the opportunity to creatively incorporate these ideas into a safe, interesting and attractive play installation.

Thinking skill development:

There is great scope for the development of creativity skills in this activity.

Resource list:

- material to develop and make a presentation of the ideas

Useful links:

- Box Rock Circus: <http://www.boxrockcircus.org.uk>
- The stone spiral at Sheffield General Cemetery: http://www.geologyatsheffield.co.uk/sagt/general_cemetery_walk/ and download pdf file "Rock in the General Cemetery"

Source: All the Earthlearningidea Team, particularly Elizabeth Devon, who was the driving force behind the Box Rock Circus and Peter Kennett who led the Sheffield Stone Spiral initiative.

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