



Background Information

People who live on an island must find ways to leave the island in order to interact with others. They must also find ways to be as self-sufficient as possible so that they do not have to leave the island to obtain everything they need for survival.

By studying how people live on islands, students can begin to understand the elements of a culture. The students will learn about the following:

- how people make a living on an island (industries)
- how people get on, off, and around the island

- how people get goods and services to the island (transportation systems)
- what type of houses people live in
- whether the island has important services such as hospitals, schools, police and fire departments
- how music, dance, and other forms of art and recreation contribute to life and culture on an island

In the following activities, students first discuss island life. Then they visualize or imagine an island and create islands with modeling dough and other materials. Most students find these activities especially

interesting and exciting. Much of the challenge and enjoyment associated with this activity is that the students make their islands as real-life as possible. In the process, both students and teachers will experience another important part of this project: planning and preparing.

In the weeks before the students start to build their model islands, teachers will need to make preparations like these:

- Brainstorm with the students about supplies they could gather to make their islands. Examples of supplies: rocks, sand, grass, branches, straw, clay, small stones and pebbles, sand, tiny shells, modeling dough. Each student will also need two items: (1) a small container for storing the collected items at school and (2) a shallow cardboard box or box lid in which to build the island.
- Ask each student to make a list of supplies she/he will need. Suggest that students go on a nature walk with their parent(s) and hunt in the cupboards at home for interesting items.
- Make the students aware of the three consecutive days (and time of day) during which they will carry out this project.



- Involve parents. Send a notice home with the students, informing parents of the “Imaginary Island” project, including dates and time of day. Invite parents to volunteer to make modeling dough or assist with the projects during class time.
- Ask the students to bring their small containers to school, for storing all their island supplies. Set aside a space for storing the containers while the project is going on.
- Review with the students how they will set up and clean up after each day’s island-building activity.
- Ask the parent volunteers to gather extra supplies for students who may not have enough.
- Have large, fresh batches of light brown modeling dough ready for each day the students are building their islands. (A recipe is provided, but any recipe can be used.)

Recipe for Modeling Dough

Each student will need one or two batches of this modeling dough. Remind the students that this dough is for modeling, not for eating.

Ingredients

2 cups (500 mL) flour

1 cup (250 mL) salt

4 tsp (20 mL) cream of tartar

2 cups (500 mL) cold water

2 Tbsp (30 mL) oil

mixture of food coloring to create a light brown color

Method

- In a bowl, mix 2 cups (500 mL) flour, 1 cup (250 mL) salt, and 4 tsp (20 mL) cream of tartar.
- In a large saucepan, mix 2 cups (500 mL) cold water, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) oil, and a mixture of food coloring to create a brown color.
- Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients in the saucepan, and stir to make a thick paste.
- Place the saucepan over medium-high heat and continue stirring until the mixture is very thick (approximately 2 minutes).
- Remove the dough from the saucepan and place on a sheet of waxed paper. When the dough has cooled enough to handle, knead it until smooth, as though you were kneading bread.
- When the dough has thoroughly cooled, store it in an airtight plastic bag or container.
- The modeling dough will dry and harden after several days. To slow down the hardening process, ask the students to place a damp towel over each island overnight to prevent the dough from drying too quickly.

ACTIVITY 1

Discussing Island Culture

Purpose

To imagine and understand the unique culture of an island.

Material

Globe or world map.

Atlas.

Geography journals and pencils.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 3.
- If needed, review what an island is.
- Invite the students to describe briefly islands they have lived on or visited. Guide the students in further discussion about islands, using the following questions:
 - Do people live on islands? If so, what do they live in?
 - How do people get their food on an island?
 - Do animals live on islands?
 - Do islands have cities, farms, and industries?
 - How do people travel to an island? How do people travel around an island?
 - Do all islands have schools? If not, how do students receive schooling?



- Do all islands have hospitals, fire departments, and police departments? If not, how do people receive help when they need it?
- Display the globe or world map, and ask the students to point to two islands in two different parts of the world. With the students, discuss some differences they see in the islands they chose. (Examples: Are the islands in the Northern or Southern Hemisphere? Is a particular island part of an archipelago, and if so, which one? How do these islands differ in size? Do these islands have mountains and hills?)
- Invite the students to consult the atlas to find out more about these two islands chosen. (Examples: How many people live on the islands chosen? What kind of industries do these islands have?)
- Ask the students to use their journals to list five differences between the islands they chose.

ACTIVITY 2

Imagining an Island

Purpose

To visualize, draw, and write about an imaginary island. (This activity prepares students for the activity Building an Imaginary Island. The other step of collecting materials takes place after this activity and before building the islands.)

Material

Imaginary Island Worksheet (see NAMC's CSM).

Geography journals and pencils.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 3.
- Announce that the students will be building model islands on an upcoming day. The first step in preparing for that activity is to create an imaginary island in their minds.
- Invite the students to close their eyes and imagine an island on which they would like to live. Stress that this island is imaginary and can be exactly as each student wishes.
- While the students imagine their islands, ask a few guiding questions. Avoid questions that can be answered with yes or no, and choose questions that involve as many senses as possible. Examples: Look around your island. What do you see? What kind of animals and people?



What kind of plants? What roads and buildings? Feel your island's air on your skin. Is the weather warm, hot, or cold? Take a deep breath of your island's air. What can you smell? And so on.

- Invite the students to open their eyes and think about what they would name their imaginary islands.
- Ask them to complete the Imaginary Island Worksheets to help them further define their islands.
- Ask students to use their journals to draw a picture of and write a brief description about their island. They may keep their worksheets in their journals.

ACTIVITY 3

Building an Imaginary Island



Purpose

To turn imaginary islands into model islands.

Material

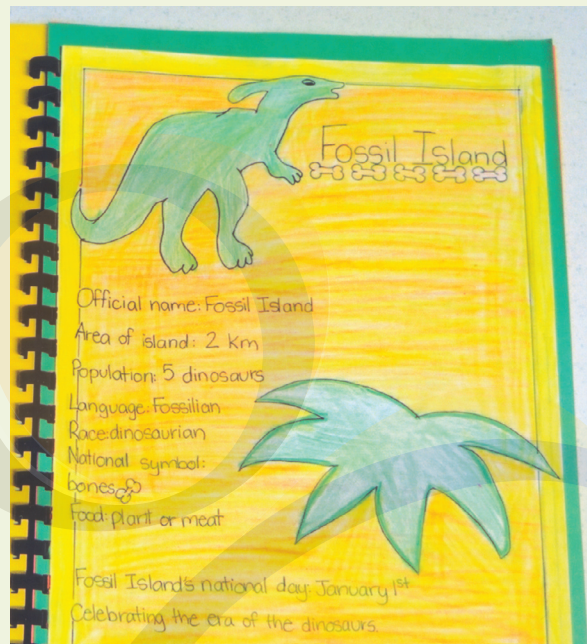
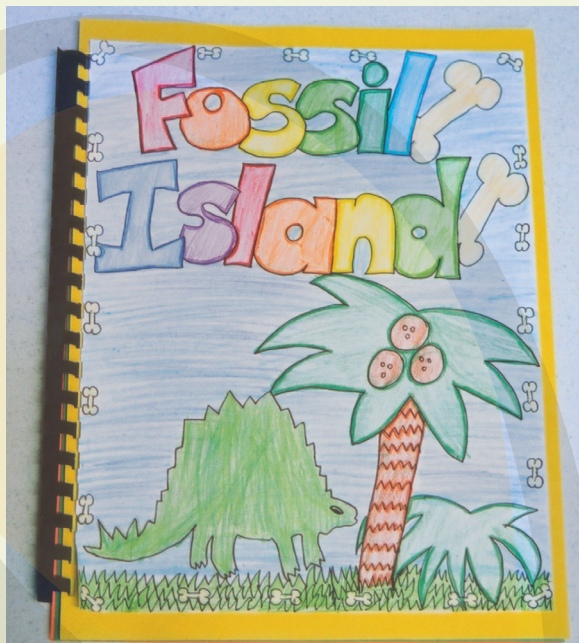
Sheets of blue cardboard or construction paper.

Modeling dough (see instructions in Background Information).

Containers of material collected by each student, such as grass, rocks, sand, branches, straw, etc.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 3.
- Ask the students to bring their containers of island supplies to where you gather together. Tell the students that they will start building their imaginary islands today.
- Explain how they can each build their island on the sheet of blue paper, using their drawings and notes from the previous activity as a guide.



- First, show the students how the blue paper creates the effect of water. Next, place a small amount of modeling dough in the middle of the “water.” Explain that in order to build an island, you will need to add to the dough and shape it before starting to place your collected materials.
- Discuss briefly what geographical features the students will add to their islands. Examples: trees, plants, rivers, ponds, cliffs, sandy beaches.
- Discuss briefly what cultural features the students will add to their islands. Examples: buildings, people, animals, roads.
- Ask the students to start building their imaginary islands. Extend the activity over two of three days, if necessary.

Extensions

- Create a flag, currency, national anthem, and a bird, flower, and tree for the island.
- Write a menu for a restaurant on the island or make up a special island recipe.
- Decide on and list the laws for the island.
- Create a brochure for people who wish to travel to the island.
- Write a report on the imaginary island. Each report will have a cover page labeled with the name of the island. The report could include a map of the island, along with its geography, climate, people, population, customs, clothing, food, shelter, island holidays, and motto. A more detailed project could also include the island’s history, government, animal and plant life, transportation, art, music, sports, and industries.