

**Lesson Title:** Observing the Debate on Land Use

**Grade Levels:** Grades 4-6

**Lesson Description:**

Using Google Earth and the book *The Little House*, students will see urbanization, discuss what has made it possible, and analyze the reasons behind it. Using views from the book, information inferred from Google Earth, and data from other sources, the students will be able to discuss the pros and cons for living in cities and the country.

**Literature Connection:**

*The Little House*  
by Virginia Lee Burton

A small house built in the country slowly watches a city approach. The city eventually surrounds the house but her excitement and curiosity about the city soon dwindles. As businesses and people come and go, the house longs for her old country surroundings. Eventually, the great-great granddaughter of the people who built the house comes along to rescue and revive the faded home.

**Concepts and skills:**

- The way humans use land in both urban and rural settings
- Reasons for settlement in certain areas

**NCSS Standards**

- Propose, compare, and evaluate alternative uses of land and resources in communities, regions, nations, and the world.

**Objectives:** Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to-

1. List pros and cons for living in the city and the country.
2. Explain reasons why society has moved towards living in cities and how that affects our land use.
3. Make an argument for both living in the country and the city.

**Google Earth Skills Needed:**

- Using various layers
- Using the fly to tool to navigate between places
- Using historical imaging

**Teaching Procedures (step-by-step directions)**

1. Ask the class whether they live in the city or the country and how they can tell. Explain that when we talk about a city, we call it urban. Urban means relating to cities or city life. Ask the class to hypothesize why people live in cities. Then introduce the word for country life: rural. Rural means relating to the country or country life. Ask the class to hypothesis why people live

in the county. Put up the information from the census about where Americans have lived over the years: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/files/table-4.pdf>. Tell the students to look at the last column, *Percent of total population*. Ask if most Americans live in urban or rural areas today. Then ask them to use the table to figure out whether or not it was always the case that most Americans lived in urban areas. Ask why it used to be more common to live in rural areas. Guide them to answer that it allowed people to own land and grow food. Then introduce that during this class, they will be learning more about urban versus rural areas, why more people started moving to cities, and the pros and cons for each.

2. In small groups have students list what they know about living in urban and rural areas. Give the groups five minutes to complete a chart with one column for information about cities and one for the country. Have each group share one thing they knew about life in each area.
3. Next announce that they will be reading a picture book about a house that experiences life in the country and a city. If there are enough copies, have the students read it in their groups. If not, read it out loud to the class.
4. Have the groups start a pro/con list for life in rural areas and life in urban areas including their own ideas and opinions from the house in the story. Each group should have one copy that all members contribute to. Tell the students that they will be adding to the list during the rest of the lesson so they do not necessarily have to fill out the entire thing right now.
5. Next, announce that they will be doing more research to better fill their pro/con lists. Call up Google Earth on a projector for the whole class to see and fly to Minnesota (44°47'30.24"N Latitude, 93° 5'56.87"W Longitude). Put on historical imaging by pressing the square button with the clock in the row of buttons above the map, and view the area in 1991 by sliding the arrow to the appropriate year. Have the students talk about what this rural land was being used for and what life might be like if they lived there. Remind them that 1991 would have had most of the conveniences we have today. Then view the area in current time and have the students talk about what the land is being used for now.
6. Ask what reasons would prompt such development in the last 20 years. Get them to think of reasons like jobs, roads, better cars, more efficient farm equipment, and being closer to conveniences. Then have them think and discuss in their groups that if land can develop that much in 20 years, how much it can change in a longer time. What do they think Minnesota looked like 50 years ago? What will it look like in 50 years? Tell them to add to their pro/con list anything they can think of from seeing the 20 year difference in the land in Minnesota.
7. Turn on the following layers: roads, place categories, and traffic (under more). Look at the same suburban area with the class. Notice how many categories of places and roads are nearby: there will probably be some, but not many. Drag the view slightly south to find country and fields. Ask the students if they see more or less place categories: no. Then fly to St. Paul, MN. Look at the places available to people in the city. Then look at the traffic and room for nature by turning on the layers: geographic features and transportation.
8. Have the students talk about the differences they saw and add to their chart. Tell them to think about impacts/issues that come up when people live very close together (urban) and very far apart (rural). Have them state any they think of from their research: pollution, more destruction of natural areas, greater loss of habitat for animals, higher crime, lack of near-by amenities and jobs.

Have them add these issues to their pro/con list if they are not already there. Then have each group relook at all of the pros and cons on their list.

9. Introduce that they will be discussing issues about land use and settlement through an activity. Tell them that they should keep their research and pro/con list in mind while completing this activity. First, have them write on a sheet of paper whether they agree or disagree with the statements listed in step 10 and one reason for why they answered that way. Tell them that this sheet will be turned in and that their reasons should be in complete sentences. Stress that it doesn't matter whether they agree or not, but rather that they have a logical reason for their opinion. Then tell everyone to stand up. Tell them that they will hear the same statements and will have to show their opinion. If they agree, they should go to one side of the room and if they disagree, they should move to the opposite side. Remind them that they should stick to what they wrote down since it doesn't matter what side their classmates go to but rather what they truly think.
10. Read the following statements:
  - Urban living is more harmful to the Earth than rural living.
  - It is better for people to live very close together than very far apart.
  - I would rather live in the country than the city.
  - Minnesota's land use has changed for the better in the last 50 years.
  - Cities provide better for people's basic needs.
  - We should have more cities.
  - We should protect the country areas.
11. After reading each statement, ask a couple people on each side for their reasoning. Make sure to call on different people each time. If all the students move to the same side, ask if any of them can think of a reason for the other side.

### Assessment

- Objective 1 is completed through the group's pro/con lists
- Objectives 2 and 3 are completed through the stand and value activity and written reasons for why they agree or disagree.

## Life in Urban and Rural Areas

In the table, record what you know about living in urban and rural areas.

Urban	Rural

## Pros and Cons of Living in Urban and Rural Areas

As we go through the lesson, record what you learn about the pros and cons of living in an urban and rural area in the table below.

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Country Life (Rural)		City Life (Urban)	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons