



# My Hometown is Cool...and So is Yours!

## Introduction:

Have you ever heard that people live in New York but have never seen the Statue of Liberty? What about those that live in the Washington, DC area, but may never have visited any of the monuments on the National Mall? When we live in a community or a place, we can easily not see the many cool things about the place that we live. We miss things that others who visit our town might see, and think are very interesting and fun.

In order to see communities in a new way, it is sometimes necessary to take a step back and consider what a visitor might find interesting about your town. Do they see cool buildings, pretty scenery, interesting history, or places to visit and see. Our goal for this activity is to explore our towns to understand what our towns are made of, why they are unique, and what we can enjoy about them.

## Supplies:

- Pencils
- Markers, Crayons, Colored Pencils
- Paper

## Time:

- 45 mins

## Age/Grade Level:

K-5 with ability to adapt to higher grades

## Lesson Goals:

This lesson encourages good citizenship by enabling learners to recognize the assets in their own communities so that they become good future ambassadors. By designing a unique seal for their hometowns, youth learn the value that exists in the location and develop a sense of pride in the community.

## Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe the components of the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Identify, evaluate, and explain assets in their own communities
- Illustrate a unique seal of their community based upon knowledge gained

## Facilitator Resources-Preparing for the Activity:

- Secure a location for the activity with space for art and drawing.
- Make copies of the handouts and gather art supplies.
- Review the lesson instructions and become familiar with the elements of the Seal of Virginia, as well as other example seals if desired.
- Set up a PowerPoint slide or choose a web page to display the seal and other examples (optional).
- Review the discussion questions.
- Consider the assets in your own hometown and prepare to present them as an example to the students.

*This lesson is adapted and updated from Proudfoot, C.N., Frost, R., and Toppe, M. (2016). "My Hometown is Cool...and So is Yours" in 4-H Inspire Learning Series. Morgantown: West Virginia University Extension Service. Used with permission.*





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## Opening Questions:

- What is a community? What is your community? For the purpose of this exercise, what is our community? (e.g., school, town, county, club, etc.)
- Do you think a first-time visitor to your hometown or community would see things the same as you do? Why or why not?
- What things in your hometown or community might be interesting to a first-time visitor?
- Why do local residents in a community sometimes not see the “cool” things in their communities?

## Background Information

This lesson follows the Civic Engagement pillar area framework to educate youth about their communities through the innovative method of analysing the Seal of the Commonwealth and the history and symbolism behind it. In this session, the Seal of Virginia is used as a platform to introduce the concept of community assets, culture, and history. The process of understanding community assets helps residents see value and develop pride in their home communities. As youth in this session grow and interact with people from other areas, this lesson will empower them with tools to talk about their hometowns with pride and encourage visitors to become aware of what the area has to offer.

In addition to its basis in the civic education focus area of the Civic Engagement pillar area, this lesson also incorporates best practices found in the *Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development* and the *4-H Thriving Model*. Specifically, the lesson promotes an inclusive environment, and the developmental context of sparks and belonging, where youth are encouraged to express themselves freely and their interpretation of information is supported. It encourages opportunity for youth engagement and mastery, because the lesson attempts to “plant the seed” necessary to encourage youth to become more civically engaged in the future, and it promotes youth to be engaged in learning through prosocial orientation, reflection, and direct participation.

## Information on Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia

<https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/secretary-of-the-commonwealth/pdf/1718-bluebook/3-history-of-the-great-seal.pdf>

## Activity:

- As we start the activity, let’s share about a few assets in our own hometown, such as parks, historic sites, a unique restaurant, or a local festival. We don’t often recognize the assets around us until we look at it from a fresh perspective, such as a first-time visitor.
- Answer the opening questions from above.





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- Using the writing/coloring utensils take a few minutes to write down all the things you believe make their hometown, community, or neighbourhood unique. Try and list as many examples as possible such as attractions, events, landmarks, buildings, locations, industry, people, activities, foods, or anything else you feel is special.
- Take a look at the Seal of Virginia. Look at each element of the seal and describe its significance using the resources in the background information section above.
- Design a seal for your hometown using the list that you created. Use any of the art supplies to do this. The more creative the better. Your seal does not have to look like the Seal of Virginia. Seals can be of different shapes, sizes, and complexity. Be creative!
- Once you are finished, we will present our seals to the group. You will tell the group about your seal, what each element represents, why it is important.

## Reflect:

- What did you learn about your own community during this activity?
- What did you learn about other communities during this activity?
- Do you feel differently about your own community than you did before the lesson?

## Application:

- What will you tell people when they ask you about your community, or other communities, in the future?
- How can you continue to build interest and tell the story of your community?

## Variation

To extend the lesson, or for use with older youth, participants could be asked to search online to see if their community (town, city, county, etc.) already has a seal. If it does, they could describe its symbolism to the group, and then make recommendations for how they might change it if they were designing a new seal today.

## Additional References

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/seal-of-the-commonwealth-of-virginia/>

<https://www.virginia.org/plan-your-trip/about-virginia/state-symbols-seals-and-emblems/>

