

Using Postcards in the Classroom

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An idea I've been using successfully for several years in all my junior and senior high, college and business classes is postcards! I collect them whenever I travel and ask all my friends to send me their favorites from their hometowns or holidays. I keep them all in a special postcard file book available at most large bookstores. The book is easy to carry to class and keeps everything neatly organized and clean. Look for colorful or unusual cards in addition to the usual famous scenes. My own books are divided into various sections. I have postcards from all over the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. From scenes of my hometown to great monuments to scenic wonders -- it's all here! In addition to noted tourist attractions, I have sports scenes, people at work, religious motifs and a few "joke" cards. I can use the cards to practice many different structures such as:

1. Where is this? What country, city, continent?
2. What do we call this building/monument/sport/etc. in English?
3. What color/shape/condition is this?
4. What are they doing?
5. What are they wearing?
6. What religion are these people practicing?
7. Would you like to visit this place? Why or why not?
8. Would you like to play this sport? Why or why not?
9. Have you ever been here/done this?
10. What would you like to do if you visited this place?

The questions and structures that you practice are limited only by the students' level. There is nothing "built-in", so the whole exercise is up to you. For that reason, you should probably do a little thinking about how you want to use your collection before you go to class. If you don't want to build a lesson around the postcards, just take a few to talk about as you wait for late students to show up or for a warm-up before or a wind-down after your regular lesson. They can also be used as "Realia" to supplement your texts. It will add interest to your class and hopefully generate some enthusiasm for a more international outlook in your students. Happy collecting!