

**LESSON PLAN 46: WEBCAMS ON THE WORLD**

**Objective:** Using live online video feeds as resources in your classroom.

**Age range:** 5-18

**WHAT IS AN ONLINE WEBCAM?**

A webcam is simply a video camera that transmits images across the Internet. You might use one on your own computer for taking pictures or making video calls on services like Skype or MSN Messenger. Live webcams, however, are set up specifically for others to view what they're looking at. Many are placed in a variety of locations around the world and let you see what's happening at any given moment. The quality of the earliest webcams wasn't great and often images were just individual photos taken at different time intervals (known as 'refresh' images). Nowadays, webcams are much better quality and many provide live, real-time, continuous video footage (aka 'streaming').

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The first live webcam started in 1991 and showed a coffee pot in the computer science department at Cambridge University. It was switched off in August 2001. The oldest webcam still operating is FogCam ([www.fogcam.org](http://www.fogcam.org)) at San Francisco State University, which has been running since 1994.

**YOU WILL NEED**

Computer, Browser, Internet Access.

**DEVELOPING SKILLS**

Geography, research, visual analysis, video photography, computing.

**METHOD**

1. Online webcams are extremely easy to use. Someone else deals with the actual camera, you're simply viewing the images it takes.
2. Open your browser and enter the website address of the webcam (or the site that offers the webcam feed). Several sites offer access to multiple cameras – see list opposite for examples.
3. The video image will play within the browser (usually automatically), so just sit back and watch. Some webcams also allow you to change the view by moving the camera – simply follow the instructions.

**USING WEBCAMS IN CLASS**

There are a number of ways that you can use a live webcam in class. You may be studying a place or an historical event, and you can use them to virtually visit locations from the comfort of your classroom. Live webcams are ideal for showing differences around the



world, such as time, weather and landscape. You could check out:

**Buildings** – View some famous structures like the Eiffel Tower ([www.paris-live.com](http://www.paris-live.com)) or the Burj Arab, the sail-shaped resort in Dubai, UAE ([www.earthtv.com](http://www.earthtv.com))

**Wildlife** – From penguins in Antarctica to the Loch Ness monster, there are webcams positioned to view animals in both the wild and zoos. Africam ([www.africam.com](http://www.africam.com)) offers four different cameras – Nikorho Pan, Elephant Plains, Flamingo Island, and, most recently, Tembe Elephant Park

**Historical** – You can view ruins in Rome ([www.capitolium.org](http://www.capitolium.org)) or ancient Scottish Castles, like Eilean Donan on Loch Long.

**The environment** – Check out rivers, national parks, mountains and volcanoes.

**New Zealand** – Naturally, there are plenty of webcams positioned strategically around New Zealand's cities and countryside. Try [www.enzed.com/cam.html](http://www.enzed.com/cam.html) for a selection.

**Activities** – Some events provide webcam coverage, such as New Year celebrations, carnivals, sporting occasions, and the recent anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

**Other** – There are host of other places webcams have been put for you to explore and weave into your lessons. These include: construction sites, traffic, shopping malls, haunted houses and even the bridges of ocean cruise liners.

**WEBCAM SITES YOU COULD TRY:**

Live Webcam Directory – [www.live-webcam-directory.com](http://www.live-webcam-directory.com)

EarthTV – [www.earthtv.com](http://www.earthtv.com)

Webcam Central – [www.camcentral.com](http://www.camcentral.com)

Webcam List – [www.webcam-list.com](http://www.webcam-list.com)

Camvista – [www.camvista.com](http://www.camvista.com)



**Please note:** These are commercial sites. We recommend you research on your own the webcams you want to use as some advertising may not be appropriate for use in class.

**TIME LAPSE**

EarthTV has created some great time lapse shows, covering anything from a specific event, to action during a day or the changing scene across a whole year. Each month, it also compiles 'What a world!', which features the best clips during the last month from its 70-odd webcams.