

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson Title: Flags of Latin America

Grade level: 6-8

Subject Area: Geography

Duration: Two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Examine and record basic facts about a Latin American country
2. Learn the significance of that country's flag
3. Create a rendering of the flag and explain the meaning of its colors and design

Materials

- Map of South and Central America, including the Caribbean
- Large (4" x 6") index cards (one for each student)
- Colored markers (for each student)
- Plain printer paper
- Internet access
- Resources about the countries of Latin America

Procedures:

1. Choose Latin American (including Caribbean) countries for students to research, selecting one country per student in your class. Write the names of the countries on the top of large index cards.
2. Begin the lesson by showing students an American flag (or a picture of one, if you do not have one accessible). See a large image of the American flag at <http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/flags/usalarge.htm>. As a class, briefly discuss the significance of the flag's symbols and colors. The 50 stars represent the states of the union, and the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies. The colors of the original flag did not have any symbolic meaning at the time. As part of the Great Seal, however, they were symbolic. White was chosen to signify purity and innocence; red, hardiness and valor; and blue, vigilance, perseverance, and justice. You may also want to look at your state flag and discuss its symbols. You can find links to state flags and information at <http://www.m-w.com/maps/mwmapstfk.html>.
3. Explain to students that they are each going to research important facts about a country in Latin America. Once they've completed their research, they will study that country's flag, learn about its symbols, and re-create that flag to present to the class. To assign countries, hand out the index cards you have prepared. Have students use print and Internet resources to find facts about their countries. The following Web sites will be helpful:

<http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/sa.htm>

<<http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/io.htm>> (See islands under “Caribbean Sea.”)

4. Ask students to complete the information below about their assigned countries on their index cards:

- Official name:
- Form of government:
- Current leader of country (position and name):
- Population:
- Capital city:
- Languages:
- Religions:
- Land area:
- Climate:
- Terrain:
- Official currency:
- Literacy rate:

5. Once students have completed their initial research, have them access the Web sites below, in addition to those already identified, to see the country's national flag and learn the significance of its symbols, colors, and mottoes. (In some cases, students may want to do additional research about the country's history to better understand the flag.) Explain that a flag may include colors, symbols, or mottoes that reflect the nation's history, government, resources, geography—even the spirit of its people. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- Has the flag changed throughout the country's history? If so, why? How has it changed?
- What does the current flag reflect about the nation?
- Explain the significance of the flag's symbols, colors, or mottoes.
- Are any of the facts you learned about the country reflected in its flag?
- Did you learn anything new about the country from its flag?

Flags of the World

<http://www.fotw.stm.it/flags/index.html>

CIA Factbook

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/indexgeo.html> (Click flag at top of country page for larger version.)

6. Have students use plain printer paper and colored markers to re-create their flags. Students should pin their flag images around a class map of Latin America. Have each student put his or her index card with information about the country below the appropriate flag. Then connect each flag to its country on the map with a piece of ribbon or string.

7. Ask students to make brief presentations about their flags in which they explain the significance of the flags' symbols and colors.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some common themes found in the flags of Latin American countries?
2. Name three types of information that can be expressed about a country through its flag. (*Answers may include a country's history, its government, its geography, its resources, or even the spirit of its people.*) Give an example of each.
3. What are some reasons that flags may change during a country's history? Why do you think this is important?

Extension:

Create a School Flag

As a class, discuss some of the elements that make your school different from others, such as its geography, its focus on a particular subject area, the diversity of its students, its history, or its strength in sports. Does your school have a motto? If not, what could that motto be? Have students work in pairs to create their own school flags, considering symbols, colors, and mottoes that reflect the school's character.

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students participate in class discussion, research a country, and re-create and explain the significance of a flag.

Three points: participated actively in class discussion; exhibited strong research skills; demonstrated above-average creativity and communication skills in their flag design and presentation.

Two points: participated to an average degree in class discussion; exhibited on-grade research skills; demonstrated average creativity and communication skills in their flag design and presentation.

One point: participated little in class discussion; exhibited weak research skills; demonstrated below-average creativity and communication skills in their flag design and presentation.

Suggested Reading:

Venezuela (Globe-Trotters Club)

Helga Jones. Carolrhoda Books, 2000.

This simple yet lively book is a good introduction to Venezuela. Brief entries cover the country's geography, history, and the diverse peoples who live there, as well as its schools, entertainment, games, and food! Lots of illustrations and photographs as well as a short glossary help the country come to life.

Venezuela in Pictures (Visual Geography series)

Lincoln A. Boehm. Lerner Publications, 1998.

Written for an older audience than the previous title, this brief but thorough book groups information about Venezuela into four topics: the land, history and government, the people, and the economy. Each section is detailed, with either color or black-and-white photographs accompanying the text.

Vocabulary

currency

Definition: Money in circulation in a particular place.

Context: The **currency** in Argentina is the peso, equal to one United States dollar.

flag

Definition: A piece of cloth with a special design that is used as a symbol (as of a nation).

Context: On the American **flag**, the white stars correspond to the states of the union and the stripes stand for the 13 original colonies.

motto

Definition: A sentence, phrase, or word inscribed on something to suggest its use or nature; a short expression of a guiding rule of conduct.

Context: The state flag of New York includes the **motto** “Excelsior” (“Ever upward”) on a ribbon.

symbol

Definition: Something that stands for something else; something real that stands for or suggests another thing that cannot in itself be pictured or shown.

Context: The central image on Canada's flag, the maple leaf, is a national **symbol** of the country.

terrain

Definition: The surface features of an area of land.

Context: The **terrain** of eastern Chile is mountainous.

Academic Standards:

This lesson adheres to the standards issued by the National Council for the Social Studies for students in grades 5-8:

1. Provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.
2. Provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
3. Provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.

Credit

Joy Brewster, freelance writer and editor of educational material.

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