



**TLC Elementary School Lesson Plan
U.S. Geography: The Midwest**

Subject

U.S. Geography

Grade level

3-5

Duration

Two to three class periods

Objectives

Students will

- learn about the geography of the Midwest;
- examine the importance of agriculture to the Midwest economy; and
- create billboards advertising agricultural products grown in the Midwest.

Materials

- Pencils, erasers, and rulers
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- White posterboard or large mural paper
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- *U.S. Geography: The Midwest* video and VCR
- Atlases and other library resources
- Advertisements for agricultural products—see the “Got Milk” (<http://www.whymilk.com>) and “California Cheese” (<http://www.calif-dairy.com/>) Web sites for examples

Procedures

1. Open the lesson by discussing the term “America’s Breadbasket” with students. Discuss the Midwest’s geography, how topographical features such as the Great Lakes were formed, and why this region is so closely associated with farming and agriculture. A good way to introduce the Midwest and its “breadbasket” status is to show segments of the video *U.S. Geography: The Midwest*.
2. After watching the video, review some of the agricultural products the Midwest is known for (wheat, dairy, cranberries, cattle, and corn). Discuss the three sections of the Midwest—the Lake states, Northern Plains states, and Corn Belt. Ask students: Why are certain products grown in one region more than the others? How important is agriculture to the Midwest’s economy?
3. Share magazine advertisements for agricultural products with students, and discuss how advertisers use slogans like “Got Milk?” to draw attention to their

products. Ask students: How do advertising campaigns help promote and sell specific products? In what ways can they be used to inform people about unfamiliar or new products?

4. Divide students into groups, and have each group make a billboard advertising an agricultural product found in the Midwest. Allow groups to choose their own products, but make sure that all the major products you've discussed are covered by the class. Students' billboards should be creative but must include the following:
 - A product slogan
 - Drawings, photographs, or some form of illustration
 - Uses for the product
 - The Midwest state(s) where the product was grown or produced
 - Details about how the product was made
5. Give students time in class to begin researching products and creating their billboards. Have them complete the billboards as homework. Students may use magazines, atlases and other library resources, and the Internet to conduct their research. These Web sites are good resources:
 - <http://www.geobop.com/World/NA/Topics/Industry/Ag/States/>
 - <http://www.startribune.com/stories/1282/53020.html>
 - <http://www.cmp.ucr.edu/photography/harvest/#>
 - <http://www.cyberspaceag.com/>
 - <http://www.iowafarmer.com/>
 - <http://www.campsilos.org/mod4/students/index.shtml>
 - <http://www.usembassy.de/usa/travel-regions.htm#midwest>
6. Have the groups "pitch" the completed billboards to the class, explaining their advertising strategy. Allow time for student questions about each group's product and billboard.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions and their group's advertising sales pitch; worked cooperatively in billboard groups; created good and colorful billboards that met all five criteria; attentively listened to the presentations.

2 points: Students somewhat participated in class discussions and their group's advertising sales pitch; worked somewhat cooperatively in billboard groups; created a presentable billboard that met three criteria; somewhat listened to the presentations.

1 point: Students worked somewhat cooperatively in billboard groups; created a presentable billboard that met two or fewer criteria; hardly listened to the presentations.

Vocabulary ecosystem

Definition: A community of plants and animals that live together in the same environment and depend on each other for survival

Context: The plants and animals of the grassland ecosystem thrive in this environment.

silt

Definition: A type of sediment made up of tiny particles of rock

Context: As the glaciers melted, they deposited rock, clay, and silt across the Midwest.

glacier

Definition: A huge, slow-moving mass of ice and snow

Context: The Great Lakes were formed by glaciers over a span of 2 million years.

tectonic plates

Definition: Large sections of the Earth’s crust that move against one another, generating volcanoes and earthquakes

Context: As the Earth’s tectonic plates shifted and collided, they created a ridge of mountains in the western part of North America that stretches from the Sierra Nevada north to the Canadian Rockies.

grassland

Definition: Large, open areas of land covered in various types of grasses

Context: The American prairie is one type of grassland.

Academic Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following standards:

- Culture
- People, Places, and Environments
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Global Connections

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) provides 18 national geography standards that the geographically informed person knows and understands. To view the standards online, go to www.ncge.org.

This lesson plan addresses the following standards:

- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- Human Systems
- Environment and Society

Credit

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