



TLC Elementary School Lesson Plan
U.S. Geography: The West

Subject

U.S. Geography

Grade Level

3-5

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- use the *U.S. Geography: The West* video, travel brochures, the Internet, and other sources to learn about the national parks of the West;
- create travel brochures for the national parks of the West, indicating unique geological features and defining aspects of the different parks; and
- use what they learn in making their travel brochures to compare and contrast the national parks of the West.

Materials

- Pencils, erasers, and rulers
- Fine-point black pens (optional)
- Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- White construction paper
- Travel brochures from various locations and/or travel magazines
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- *U.S. Geography: The West* video and VCR
- Atlases and other library resources

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the *U.S. Geography: The West* video. Ask students: What topography and unique geologic features are found in the West? Which national parks are located there? On the board or an overhead projector, list the seven parks discussed in the video:
 - Yellowstone National Park
 - Grand Canyon National Park
 - Yosemite National Park
 - Sequoia National Park
 - Grand Teton National Park
 - Olympic National Park

- Death Valley National Park
2. Discuss the locations, topography, and geology of these parks. Ask students: Why might a person choose to visit one park over another? What rare or unusual plants and animals thrive in specific parks? Why might certain species live in one location and not another?
 3. Explain that travel agents and tourists use travel brochures to find information on areas that they or their customers might be interested in visiting, such as national parks. Break the students into groups to evaluate the tourist brochures and travel magazines.
 4. After the groups have had a chance to review the materials, hold a class discussion. Ask students: What do they like about a particular brochure or travel magazine? What don't they like? What common features are found in all their brochures? Make a class list of things travel brochures should include.
 5. Using information from the video, library sources, and the Internet, have each student select a national park in the West and create a travel brochure for it. Allow students to choose their own parks, but make sure that all seven parks are covered by the class.
 6. Students' brochures should be creative but must include the following:
 - General overview of the park, including its location
 - Park history
 - Description of unique geological features
 - Description of animals and vegetation found in the park
 - Things to do and see in the park
 - Park hours and fees
 - Illustrations or photographs
 7. Give students time in class to begin researching parks and working on their travel brochures. Have them finish the brochures as homework. Students may use travel magazines, atlases and other library resources, and the Internet to conduct their research. These Web sites are good resources:
 - <http://www.nps.gov/parks.html>
 - <http://www.us-national-parks.net/>
 - <http://www.areaparks.com/>
 - <http://www.americanparknetwork.com/>
 - <http://wrgis.wr.usgs.gov/docs/usgsnps/project/home.html>
 8. Display the finished works, and provide time for students to read through their peers' brochures. Then, as a class, compare and contrast the parks. Ask students: Which parks sound like they would be more interesting to visit? Why?. Conduct a vote to see which national park in the West the class would most like to visit if you were able to take a class field trip.

Evaluation

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

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions; used professional brochures, books, and other resources wisely; made attractive and creative brochures that correctly included all seven criteria.

2 points: Students somewhat participated in class discussions; used books and other resources to some degree; made presentable brochures that correctly included four criteria.

1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; were unable to use resource materials without guidance; made presentable brochures that correctly included two criteria.

Vocabulary
topography

Definition: A description of the surface features of a region, both natural and man-made
Context: Topography includes hills, valleys, lakes, streams, ridges, and glaciers.

geology

Definition: The study of the Earth
Context: You can't explore the West's geology without a look at the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

fault

Definition: Cracks in the Earth's crust created by shifting and colliding plates
Context: One of the most famous cracks is the San Andreas Fault, which extends 600 miles from northwestern to southeastern California.

nocturnal

Definition: Active at night
Context: Geckos, coyotes, and many other animals in Death Valley are nocturnal because the desert is coolest at night.

magma

Definition: Molten rock from volcanoes
Context: Magma remains beneath the Earth's surface in Yellowstone National Park.

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:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Individual Development and Identity
- Science, Technology, and Society
- 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
- Environment and Society
- Applying Geography
- Geographic Skills

Credit

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