

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson Title: Mapping South America

Grade level: 6-8

Subject Area: Geography

Duration: Two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Examine different aspects of the South American continent, including its geography, climate, industry, and political boundaries
2. Create a map of South America illustrating a particular aspect of the continent

Materials:

- A few examples of different types of maps: political, physical, and population
- Five large pieces of paper
- Internet access
- Printer
- Encyclopedias
- Atlases
- Colored markers for each group

Procedures:

Note: Before beginning this lesson, draw a large outline of South America onto each of 4 large pieces of paper. You can find an outline at <http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/samerica/saoutl.htm>. Enlarge the image on an overhead before tracing it onto large pieces of paper for the students to use.

1. As a class, look at different types of maps, such as political, physical, and population maps. Ask students to discuss what information the maps convey. For example, a political map shows the borders of countries and the locations of major cities. A physical map shows landforms. A population map shows the density of population throughout the region. Why is each type of map important? How and by whom is each type used?
2. Explain that in this lesson students will be creating different types of maps of South America to learn about different aspects of the continent. On a large piece of paper, draw a chart with four columns. Label them Political/Population, Geography/Terrain, Biomes/Vegetation, and Industry/Major Exports. Using the questions below as a guide, ask students to brainstorm what they know about South America for each of these topics. Write their ideas in the appropriate columns.

- What countries and major cities can they name?
 - Where are the larger concentrations of people?
 - What are some significant geographical features of the continent?
 - What do they know about the climate and vegetation in different parts of South America?
 - What are some important industries and exports?
3. Divide the class into four groups and assign one of the topics listed above to each group. Give each group a large piece of paper with the prepared outline of South America on it. Explain that the members of each group will study a different aspect of South America and will create a map to show what they've learned.
 4. Give the members of each group the following questions to use as a guide as they create the maps. (How each group creates its map is the group's decision, but the map must answer all the questions.)

Political/Population

- Identify the countries of South America (and their borders).
- Where are the capitals and major cities of South America?
- How does the population density (people per square mile) vary throughout South America? (You can show population density by region or by country.)

Geography/Terrain

- Where are the major geographical features of South America?
- What oceans and bodies of water border the continent?
- What are its major mountain ranges?
- What are its major rivers?
- Locate and label at least two or three of the following features on the map: island, isthmus, volcano, cape, gulf, plateau, falls, lake, glacier.

Biomes/Vegetation

- Where are the different biomes, or vegetation zones, in South America? (Remind students that a biome is an ecological community defined by its climate and vegetation, such as a desert, rain forest, or grassland.)
- Label some of the biomes of South America.
- Where is the equator in relation to the continent?
- Label the two areas with the greatest and least amounts of rainfall. Label two areas that have very high and very low temperatures.
- For each biome, name at least one indigenous plant and one indigenous animal.

Industry/Major Exports

- Show where the following crops are grown: bananas, potatoes, wheat, barley, cocoa, cotton, rice, sugar, coffee, oranges, and lemons.
- Show where some of the following industries are located: oil, mining (for gold, copper, emeralds, nickel, tin, silver, lead, and zinc), wine, cattle, and sheep.

- Which areas depend heavily on fishing?
 - What other products are exported to the United States and other countries?
5. Provide appropriate atlases, books, and Web sites to help each group conduct its research. Each map must illustrate the group's answers to the questions above. Encourage students to be creative and to use symbols, color-coding, and other keys to show their information. They must also provide a key or legend for their maps. The following are helpful Web sites:
- <<http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/sa.htm>>
 <<http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/>>
 <<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/worldbook/atozgeography/s/520980.html>>
6. When groups have completed their maps, have them hang the maps around the classroom and present them to the class. Encourage students to consider the relationships among all the maps and refer to each other's maps in their presentations. For example, do they notice that certain crops or resources are found in specific biomes or terrains?
7. After the presentations, discuss the need for different types of maps. Would it be possible to have all the information on one map? Why would you refer to different kinds of maps? What kind of map do students think is used most often?

Discussion Questions

1. Examine the political/population map of South America. What part of the continent is most densely populated? Where do you find the largest cities? Explain your observations. Where is it least densely populated? In your own words, summarize the relationship between geography and population.
2. Compare the maps that show the geography/terrain and the industry/major exports. In which biome (or biomes) do you find the most cattle, coffee, bananas, and sugarcane? What is the relationship between the geographical features and the agricultural activity in that area?
3. Consider the need for each type of map covered in this class. Who might rely on each type of map?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students participate in class discussion, work within their groups, research and write about their assigned topic, and complete and present their map of South America:

Three points: participated actively in class discussion; worked very effectively within their groups; exhibited strong research and writing skills; made complete maps that thoroughly answered all the questions provided; demonstrated above-average creativity and communication skills in their map presentation.

Two points: participated to an average degree in class discussion; worked well within their groups; exhibited on-grade research and writing skills; made maps that answered some of the

questions provided; demonstrated average creativity and communication skills in their map presentation.

One point: participated little in class discussion; had difficulty working within their groups; exhibited weak research and writing skills; made maps that answered few of the questions provided; demonstrated below-average creativity and communication skills in their map presentation.

Extension:

More Maps

Challenge students to create maps showing different aspects of South America, such as the extreme difference in rainfall between the Atacama Desert and the Amazon River Basin. Students could create a transportation map showing important railways, highways, shipping routes, and airports. Another kind of map could highlight the continent's biomes and one or two unique animals living in each biome. Examples are the giant anteater on the Pampas, the king penguin in Patagonia, the llama in the Andes, the piranha and the ocelot in the rain forest, and the mudskipper (a type of fish) in Ecuador's mangrove swamps.

Suggested Reading:

Brazil (Modern Nations of the World)

Laurel Corona. Lucent Books, 2000.

Learn all about the history, geography, and culture of Brazil! Occasional boxed insets add dimension to the information by highlighting specific places or people of note. Black-and-white photographs appear throughout the text, and the back matter features a list of facts about Brazil, a chronology, and more.

Peru: Lost Cities, Found Hopes

David C. King. Benchmark Books, 1997.

Filled with colorful photographs, this book provides an introduction to the land and people of Peru. Several chapters cover the cultures of the diverse peoples living in Peru, describing clothing, schooling, entertainment, and crafts. A map and list of facts about the country are included.

Vocabulary

biome

Definition: A major type of ecological community defined by its climate and vegetation.

Context: South America has a variety of **biomes**, including deserts, rain forests, and grasslands.

export

Definition: Something that is carried or sent abroad for sale in another country.

Context: Bananas and coffee are two of South America's most important **exports**.

Map

Definition: An image that represents a geographic area in a way that helps people find places or understand the area's features.

Context: A general reference **map** shows country boundaries, cities, rivers, mountains, and other features.

population

Definition: The number of people living in a country or region.

Context: About 75 percent of South America's **population** lives in cities.

Credit

Joy Brewster, freelance writer and editor of educational material.

Academic Standards:

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

1. Provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
2. Provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

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