

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson Title: Tour of South America

Grade level: 6-8

Subject Area: Geography, World History

Duration: Two or three class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Become familiar with a famous city or landmark, ancient ruin, or natural wonder found in South America
2. Create a slideshow with images and facts about the significance of that South American site and present it to the class

Materials:

- Books, CD-ROMs, and other resources about South America
- Internet access
- Index cards
- Equipment to help students create a slideshow, such as a scanner (to scan images from books and magazines), a color printer (to print digital scans and images from the Internet), transparencies, an overhead projector, or software with a slideshow application such as Hyperstudio or PowerPoint
- Materials that students can use to create a “poster” slideshow: poster board, paper, markers, magazine images, scissors, and tape

Procedures:

1. Show students a map of South America. Explain that as the fourth largest continent in the world, it extends from the tropics in the north to just 600 miles from Antarctica in the south. The countries of South America vary in their histories, cultures, economies, industries, and standards of living. South America has nearly every type of climate, from dry deserts to lush rain forests, and a variety of fascinating cultures and cities, from the modern capital Brasília to the ancient ruins of Machu Picchu.
2. Tell students that one way to appreciate the diversity of the continent's geography, culture, and history is to focus on South America's natural and cultural treasures. Tell students that they will be creating a “Tour of South America” that focuses on these treasures. Working in pairs, students will use print and Internet resources to research a South American city, landmark, ancient ruin, monument, or natural wonder. Then they will choose five images to create a slideshow. Encourage students to choose images that show the overall site and pictures that reveal interesting details of the place.

Depending on your resources, you may have students create slideshows for an overhead

projector or using a software program. They may wish to scan images from books or magazines, download images from the Internet, or print digital images on a color printer. Alternatively, you may have students draw, copy, or paste images onto poster board.

3. Divide class into pairs or let students choose their own partners. Provide print and Internet resources for student pairs to peruse before they choose a site to explore. You may want to write the following list of suggestions on the board:
 - Angel Falls (Venezuela): highest waterfall in the world
 - Lake Titicaca (between Bolivia and Peru): world's highest navigable lake
 - Amazon River (Peru and Brazil): second longest river in the world
 - Amazon rain forest (Brazil): largest rain forest in the world; home to diverse plants and animals, as well as to many people such as the Yanomami and the Machiguenga
 - Tierra del Fuego (Argentina): rocky islands with glaciers, mountains, and valleys
 - Moreno Glacier (Argentina): dramatic “dam” in Lake Argentino
 - Atacama Desert (Chile): driest place in the world
 - Cotopaxi (Ecuador): volcano along the “volcano boulevard” in the Andes
 - San Agustin (Colombia): small village near mountains, famous for ancient stone figures
 - Machu Picchu (Peru): lost city of the Incas
 - Pampas (Argentina): vast central plains, home to gauchos, or South American cowboys
 - Rio de Janeiro (Brazil): major city, popular tourist location
 - São Paulo (Brazil): largest city in Brazil, with more than 16 million people
 - Brasília (Brazil): capital of Brazil, with modern design and architecture
 - Cerro Tololo (Chile): world's second largest observatory, high in the Andes
 - Punta Arenas (Chile): world's southernmost city
 - Buenos Aires (Argentina): major city; founded by the Spanish in 1536
4. Once students have selected their sites, ask them to tell you what they have chosen. If more than one pair selects the same site, encourage them to work together and highlight different aspects of that site. For example, if two pairs want to explore the Amazon rain forest, one could study the diverse plant and animal life while the other looks at native peoples.
5. During one class period and as a homework assignment, ask students to research their site. First they should record important facts on an index card, including name, location, and purpose or significance. Tell students that after recording the basic facts, they should select at least five images of their site. For each image, have them write a few sentences of explanation. These “captions” should reveal interesting details about the site and how and why it is important to the people of the region. Have students create an actual or a poster slideshow.
6. During the next class period, give each pair of students about five minutes to present their slideshow. Partners should begin each presentation by pinning their index card on the correct location on a map of South America.

Discussion Questions:

1. Choose three sites (natural, historical, and cultural) discussed in class. What did each site reveal about that region or country in South America?
2. If you could visit a natural or cultural site discussed in class, which would you choose? Why?
3. Imagine you are giving a slideshow tour of the United States to students from Japan. Which natural and cultural treasures would you choose to feature? What do each of these sites reveal about our country's geography, history, or culture?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students research and write about their South American site, work with their partner, complete their slideshow, and present it to the class:

Three points: exhibited strong research and writing skills; worked well with partner; completed all elements of the project; demonstrated above-average creativity and communication skills in their slideshow presentation.

Two points: exhibited on-grade research and writing skills; worked somewhat well with partner; completed most elements of the project; demonstrated average creativity and communication skills in their slideshow presentation.

One point: exhibited weak research and writing skills; had difficulty working with partner; did not complete all elements of the project; demonstrated below-average creativity and communication skills in their slideshow presentation.

Extension:

South American Journey

Have students choose one site featured in class that they'd like to learn more about. Ask students to use what they learned from the class presentation to write a fictional journal about a visit to that site. Their journals should be written in the first person, from the point of view of someone who would be particularly interested in that site. Examples include an ecologist visiting the Amazon, an astronomer visiting Cerro Tololo, an archaeologist visiting Machu Picchu, and an architect visiting Brasília. What might that person be most excited about seeing? What questions or interests might a visit to that site evoke?

Suggested Reading:

Galapagos: Islands of Change

Lynne Born Myers and Christopher A. Myers. Hyperion Books, 1995.

Lavishly illustrated with striking color photographs, this book pulls the reader into the exotic world of the Galapagos Islands. Formed by volcanoes and inhabited by some of the world's most unique creatures, these islands were made famous by Charles Darwin, who visited them in the mid-1800s and developed his theories about evolution from his experiences there. The authors explain the ever-changing nature of the islands with diagrams of the volcanic activity that continues today. A short glossary defines important words.

South America (Continents series)

Ewan McLeish. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1997.

South America is an amazing continent, from the Andes Mountains, to the mighty Amazon River, to its rainforests and grasslands, to the Atacama Desert. In this slim volume, learn about the varied geography of South America, about its history and economy, about the culture of its many countries, and about the importance of its delicate tropical forest environments. Plenty of color photographs and maps support the text.

Vocabulary:

landmark

Definition: An important building or monument.

Context: The Eiffel Tower is a famous **landmark** in Paris, France.

monument

Definition: Something that serves as a memorial; a place of historic interest.

Context: The Washington **Monument** was erected to honor our nation's first president.

natural

Definition: Relating to the physical world; not made or changed by humans.

Context: The world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls is one of the most striking **natural** wonders of South America.

ruins

Definition: The remains of something destroyed.

Context: The **ruins** of Machu Picchu, an ancient city of the Incas, sit high in the Andes in Peru.

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 culture and cultural diversity.
2. Provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Credit

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This lesson was prepared in consultation with Thomas Malone, middle school social studies teacher.

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