



Understanding: Geography

Subject

Geography

Grade level

5-8

Duration

Three class periods

Objectives

Students will be able to

- use geography skills to create neighborhood maps, and
- identify connections between geography, culture, and the economy in their local area.

Materials

- Large white construction paper (at least one sheet per student)
- Pencils and erasers
- Colored markers or crayons
- Maps of your local area and other city maps
- Information about the economy, industry, and attractions in your local area (*usually can be found in relocation packets at a local Chamber of Commerce or local real estate offices*)
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- *Understanding: Geography* video and VCR or DVD and DVD player

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson by viewing *Understanding: Geography*. Then talk about the science of geography, the types of things geographers study, and the reasons they study them.
2. Briefly discuss the different cultures and industries students saw in the program and the connections between a place's cultures and industries and its geography.
3. Tell students that they will be making neighborhood maps to discuss local geography, economy, and culture. Share maps of your local area or other city maps, and discuss roads, major buildings, parks, natural geographic features, town centers or shops, and other kinds of things found on such maps. Talk about how to use the scale and other important features on a map. Talk

about how some maps may include numbers or symbols to represent terrain or buildings; point out each map's key, where symbols are identified.

4. Have students talk about their own neighborhoods. How big are they? What activities take place there? Are there parks or businesses? What kinds of buildings are in their neighborhood?
5. Tell students that they will begin to design their neighborhood maps as homework. Each map should be designed as a square, with a student's home at the center. Tell students to walk a block or two north, south, east, and west of their home, taking notes on what they see in all directions (houses, parks, businesses, types of vegetation and terrain, etc.). Encourage students to make sketches of what they see. Students unable to complete maps of their own neighborhoods may make one of the neighborhood around the school.
5. During the next class period have students create their maps. Tell them that each map should have a key to explain their map's symbols and include natural terrain, buildings, and streets. They may use creative symbols to represent map features as long as the symbols are included in the key. To see examples of neighborhood maps, students can go online to the following Web sites:
 - <http://www.greenmap.com/grmaps/gallery.html>
 - <http://www.mapquest.com> (by typing in an intersection or address students can see a general map of a particular area)
6. When students have completed their maps, have them write a descriptive paragraph about their neighborhood. Each paragraph should include answers to the following questions:
 - What kinds of terrain and vegetation can be found in your neighborhood?
 - What do the buildings in your neighborhood look like? What similarities do the buildings have?
 - What kinds of activities take place in your neighborhood? Where do they take place?
 - Has your neighborhood changed since you've lived there? If so, how?
7. Have students share their maps and paragraphs with the class. Then discuss the similarities between the maps, the overall similarities in your area, and how these similarities help define the local culture. Share with the class the information you have gathered about the economy and industry of your area and talk about how geography and environment has influenced the local economy.

Evaluation

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

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions; created artistic and informative neighborhood maps that included natural and manmade features as well as a key to explain the map's symbols; and wrote clear, informative paragraphs about their neighborhoods, answering all four questions.

2 points: Students somewhat participated in class discussions; created somewhat informative neighborhood maps that included either natural or manmade features and a key explaining most of the symbols used on the map; and included three of four answers to the class questions in their neighborhood paragraphs.

1 point: Students somewhat participated in class discussions; created unfinished or illegible neighborhood maps; and wrote disorganized paragraphs answering only one or two questions about their neighborhood.

Vocabulary

culture

Definition: A body of learned behaviors common to a given human society

Context: Culture is the way of life of a group of people who share similar beliefs and customs.

environment

Definition: The circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded

Context: Geographers may study how the environment influences the way people earn a living.

geography

Definition: The scientific study of Earth and its features

Context: Geography is the study of the Earth, its features, the distribution of life, including humans and the effects of human activity on the environment.

habitat

Definition: The place or environment where a plant or animal lives or grows; the typical place of residence of a person or a human group

Context: Geographers are examining how the Chesapeake Bay has created an industry centered on harvesting oysters and how that industry affects the bay's habitat.

map

Definition: A representation of a whole or a part of an area

Context: With so much information to show, and so many ways to show it, maps are valuable tools for understanding the world around us.

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 <http://www.ncge.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following standards:

- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- Environment and Society

Credit

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