

Exploring the World's Geography: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 5-8

Curriculum Focus: World Geography

Lesson Duration: Three to four class periods

Program Description

Students experience the unique characteristics of each continent in this wide-ranging overview. *Latin America* – Visits one of our closest neighbors to survey its landscapes and climate. *Europe and Russia* – Examines how a small continent supports a relatively large population. *Africa* – Explores the second-largest continent and its great diversity of physical features. *Asia and the Pacific* – Travels to the region of extremes to investigate how the islands of the Pacific formed.

I. Latin America (5 min.)

II. Europe and Russia (5 min.)

III. Africa (5 min.)

IV. Asia and the Pacific (6 min.)

Onscreen Questions

Segment I

- How might the contrasts of mountains and plains, wet and dry climates, and high and low temperatures affect the economy of a population?
- Describe some of the different landscapes in Latin America. How does the landscape influence life in Latin America?

Segment II

- Europe is a small continent with a large population. What geographic conditions on this continent make it such a popular place to live?
- How do the different climates of Europe and Russia affect their economic activities?

Segment III

- Although Africa is a large continent in area, it doesn't have the largest population. How might topography and climate limit the population of a continent?
- How are the topography and climate different in northern and southern Africa?

Segment IV

- This area is one of extremes in geographic features. What predictions could you make about the kinds of climate and land features that might be found here?
 - What are the five major land areas of Asia and the Pacific? How do the great rivers in this region help the people here survive?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Make a papier-mâché globe of Earth's continents.
- Identify the prominent physical features of each continent.
- Compare the geography of all seven continents.

Materials

- *Exploring the World's Geography* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- White construction paper (at least 7 sheets per student)
- Masking tape
- 12-inch pieces of string (one per student)
- Pencils, glue, and rulers
- Colored markers or crayons
- Black felt tip pens
- Newspaper, cut into strips
- White glue, watered down
- Large balloons (one per student)
- World maps, geography textbooks, and other library resources
- Computer with Internet access (optional)

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by discussing the diverse geography of Earth's seven continents. A good way to introduce this topic is to show segments of the program *World Geography*. After watching, ask students these questions: How is Europe different from Asia? Where is South America located? Where are the Andes? Is North America the largest continent? Also, have them describe the pampas, taiga, or other geographic features.



2. Using a globe, point out the equator and the prime meridian. Ask students which continents are below the equator and which continents are above it. From the information they learned in the program, how does the climate near the equator differ from the climate near the poles?
3. Tell students that they will be making their own papier-mâché globes, which must properly display all seven continents, the equator, and prime meridian. Students will clearly label the following physical features.
 - continents
 - all oceans
 - major rivers and lakes on each continent
 - other major physical features associated with each continent: mountains, deserts, forests, volcanoes, and islands.

Have the class come up with a list of symbols to identify the features.

4. Demonstrate how to make a papier-mâché ball.
 - Inflate a balloon and tape a length of string to one side.
 - Dip the newspaper strips into the glue and then apply them to the balloon.
 - Be sure to leave the string free.

Have students blow up their balloons, attach the strings, and cover them with about three layers of newspaper. Identify each balloon with strips of masking tape with the students' names. Place the balloons in a warm place to dry for about two days.

5. During the class periods while the globes are drying, have students use geography texts, maps, library materials, and the Internet to research the seven continents. Have them look at several examples of maps that resemble the size of the continents they should be drawing. Have them draw an outline of each continent on construction paper. Remind students that Earth's continents are not all the same size and that they should try to keep the relative sizes of the continents in mind. After outlining each continent, students need to use their research materials to label the geographic features. Listed below are some helpful Web sites:
 - <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/geography/continents>
 - <http://www.worldatlas.com/geoquiz/thelist.htm>
 - <http://members.aol.com/BOWERMANB/101.html>

If necessary, allow students time at home to finish drawing and labeling their continents

6. On the dry papier-mâché globes, have students draw the equator and the prime meridian. Next, show students a map of the world and discuss the locations of the continents on the globe. Ask them related questions (Is North America above or below the equator? Is Europe anywhere near South America?). Once students understand how to place their continents, have them cut out their paper continents, glue them to the globe, and label the oceans.
7. Hang the finished globes in the classroom, and invite students to discuss the different features of the continents, including anything interesting they learned about the geography of the world.

Assessment

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

- **3 points:** Students actively participated in class discussions; used the research materials wisely and without teacher guidance; and created finished globes that correctly met all established criteria.
- **2 points:** Students somewhat participated in class discussions; used research materials with limited teacher guidance; and created finished globes that correctly met most of the established criteria.
- **1 point:** Students somewhat participated in class discussions; were unable to use research materials without teacher assistance; and either did not finish their globes or produced globes that were missing a majority of the established criteria.

Vocabulary

archipelago

Definition: A group of islands

Context: Southeast Asia includes numerous archipelagos that connect Asia to Australia and other Pacific island nations.

climate

Definition: The average condition of the weather at a place, usually over a period of months or years, as defined by temperature, wind velocity, and precipitation

Context: The Mediterranean region has a warm, subtropical climate.

continent

Definition: A continuous mass of land; one of six or seven great divisions of land on the planet

Context: South America is one of Earth's seven continents.

elevation

Definition: The height above the level of the sea

Context: Europe has relatively low elevations, except for the Alpine mountain system that runs west-to-east.

savanna

Definition: A tropical or subtropical grassland containing scattered trees and drought-resistant growth

Context: Below the Sahara, the continent receives more rain, and the landscape gradually changes to savanna.



taiga

Definition: A belt of mostly coniferous, or needle-bearing, evergreen trees that begins in Scandinavia and covers much of Siberia

Context: The taiga is the primary source of Europe's timber.

Academic Standards**Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – The World in Spatial Terms: Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies, Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment; Places and Regions: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - People, Places, and Environments
 - Global Connections
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into four parts (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Latin America (5 min.)

From farmlands to mountains, the geography of Latin America is varied and immense. Learn about the different environments of Latin America.

II. Europe and Russia (5 min.)

Although it is the second-smallest continent, Europe has a lot of geographic variety. Explore the natural resources of Europe and Russia.

III. Africa (5 min.)

Africa is the second-largest continent. See how the unique geography of Africa makes this continent an ideal home for a large variety of wildlife and peoples.

IV. Asia and the Pacific (6 min.)

More than three-fifths of the world's people call Asia and the Pacific home, even though much of the land is uninhabitable. Come explore Asia and the Pacific.



Curriculum Units

1. Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America

Pre-viewing question

Q: What kind of geography and climate best support farming as an industry?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why is life difficult for the people who live in the Andes?

A: Although the soil in the Andes region is fertile, the terrain is steep and rugged making farming difficult. Also, the weather can be brutally cold at the highest elevations.

2. Rivers, Deserts, and Grasslands

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are some of the uses of rivers?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What is the importance of the Amazon River?

A: South Americans rely on the Amazon for transportation because it's difficult to build roads through the rain forest. The Amazon is also a source of food and electric power.

3. Climates of Europe

Pre-viewing question

Q: What is your favorite kind of climate?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Which European climate is most like the climate in your area?

A: Answers will vary.

4. Eastern Europe and Russia

Pre-viewing question

Q: How does Russia differ from the rest of Europe?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What are some of the natural resources found in Russia?

A: Russia has an abundance of natural resources including oil, coal, natural gas, and iron.

5. Life in Africa

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are the pros and cons of living on a large continent versus a small one?

A: Answers will vary.



Post-viewing question

Q: How does the different geography of Africa affect where people live?

A: Answers will vary.

6. Southwest and Central Asia

Pre-viewing question

Q: Why do you think Asia and Europe were divided into two continents?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How does the terrain of Southwest Asia compare with that of Central Asia?

A: Both regions contain large areas of desert that make farming impossible. But Southwest Asia also includes pockets of fertile valleys, while Central Asia has rugged mountains and treeless plains called steppes.

7. A World of Extremes

Pre-viewing question

Q: Why are Asia and the Pacific so densely populated?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What are some of the important crops found in Asia?

A: More than 90 percent of the world's rice comes from Asia. Wheat is also a major crop.