

Geography of South America: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 5-8

Curriculum Focus: Geography

Lesson Duration: Two or three class periods

Program Description

In this episode, students sample the cultures, resources, cities, and landforms of South America. *South America: Landscape of a Continent* – A continent of extremes, South America has a wide range of terrain that includes rivers, mountains, and pampas. *Brazil's Carnival* – One of the biggest festivals in the world, Carnival celebrates the history, religion, and culture of this diverse country. *Making a Living in Peru* – Innovative ways to use natural resources are helping Peruvians out of poverty. *Santiago: Chile's Capital City* – A bustling metropolis in the shadow of the Andes, Santiago is a center for business and culture. But like other modern cities, it struggles with pollution and related problems.

- South America: Landscape of a Continent (6 min.)
 - Brazil's Carnival (4 min.)
 - Making a Living in Peru (6 min.)
 - Santiago: Chile's Capital City (5 min.)
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Onscreen Questions

South America: Landscape of a Continent

- What topographical feature has a major influence on the climate of South America? What topographical features influence the climate where you live?

Brazil's Carnival

- What are the main features of Carnival as described in this segment? Which parts of the world have contributed to the traditions of this celebration?

Making a Living in Peru

- How have Peru's natural resources contributed to the economic successes of the people?

Santiago: Chile's Capital City

- How has Santiago's history influenced life in the city today?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Become familiar with physical maps and their functions by reading a physical map of South America and creating a physical map of a portion of the Andes.
- Learn about the geography, environment, and human cultures of the Andes by researching and presenting oral reports on a specific region of the mountain range.

Materials

- *Geography of South America* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- Geography texts and library resources
- Physical map of South America

Procedures

1. Open the lesson by talking about the human and physical geography of South America and the Andes. A good way to introduce both is to view portions of the TLC *Geography of South America* video.
2. Briefly discuss the geology of the Andes and how this mountain range has helped shape South America. Discuss how the Andes are comprised of several small mountain ranges. Show students a physical map of South America, and demonstrate how to read the map, pointing out where the Andes are higher or lower, and where they are wider or narrower.
3. Tell students that the Andes may be broadly divided into three regional zones: the Northern Andes, which includes the mountains that run through Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and parts of northern Peru; the Central Andes, which includes the part of the range that runs through Bolivia, the rest of Peru, northern Argentina, and Chile; and the Southern Andes, which includes the mountains that run through southern Chile and Argentina, through Patagonia, and down to the southernmost tip of South America, Tierra del Fuego.
4. Divide the class into three groups, one for each of the Andes' three regional zones: northern, central, and southern. Explain that the groups will put together oral reports on their regional zones and then present them to the rest of the class. The reports must be at least five minutes long and include these eight criteria:
 - A physical map of the zone (large enough to be used as a visual aid during the presentation)
 - Information on the zone's topography (Is this a wide section of the Andes? How high are the mountains? Etc.)
 - Typical climate by season
 - Vegetation
 - Animals found there



- Unique geographic features (highest peaks, major rivers or volcanoes, archaeological finds, etc.)
 - Description of the human cultures, if any, found in the zone (Are there unique tribes who call this area home? If nobody lives there, why not?)
 - Issues or problems (environmental or otherwise)
5. Talk about how best to divide the work among the group members. One easy way is to assign people specific topics to research and then present during the oral report. (For example, two people could be in charge of finding cultural information, one person in charge of determining climate, two people in charge of creating a physical map, and so on.)
 6. Give students time in class and as a homework assignment to research and practice their presentations. Students may use travel magazines; geography texts, encyclopedias, and other library resources; and the Internet to conduct their research. These Web sites have good information on the Andes:
 - <http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/andes.htm>
 - <http://www.wbu.com/chipperwoods/photos/andes.htm>
 - <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/video/andes.cfm>
 - <http://peruperu.com/andes-mountains.htm>
 - http://www.vivecuador.com/html2/eng/northern_andes.htm
 - http://www.vivecuador.com/html2/eng/southern_andes.htm
 - <http://www.chilediscover.com/info/andes.htm>
 - <http://www.ddg.com/LIS/aurelia/titpag.htm>
 - <http://www.andes.org/bookmark.html>
 - <http://www.letus.northwestern.edu/projects/esp/top10/andespage/andes.html>
 7. Have the groups present their reports to the rest of the class. Allow time for students to ask the presenters questions after each report. Once all the reports have been given, discuss the differences and similarities among the regions.

Assessment

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

- **3 points:** Students actively participated in class discussions; worked well in their groups without teacher guidance; used research materials wisely; were attentive during other group presentations; presented a well-organized group oral report that met the five-minute minimum time limit and correctly included all eight criteria.
- **2 points:** Students somewhat participated in class discussions; were able to work in their groups with limited teacher guidance; used research materials wisely; were somewhat attentive during other group presentations; presented a group oral report that was at least four minutes in length and correctly included five of the eight criteria.



- **1 point:** Students did not participate in class discussions; were unable to work in their groups or use resource materials without teacher guidance; were inattentive during other group presentations; presented an unfinished group oral report that correctly included only two of the eight criteria.

Vocabulary

Andes

Definition: A mountain system that stretches along the west coast of South America

Context: Running north to south along the west coast of South America, the Andes mountain range is one of the longest and highest in the world.

equator

Definition: An imaginary line circling the Earth at 0° latitude; the equator is equidistant from the North and South poles

Context: The equator runs through northern Ecuador and southern Colombia.

mestizo

Definition: A person of mixed European (mainly Spanish) and American Indian ancestry

Context: There is a large mestizo population in the Andes.

pampas

Definition: Grasslands of Argentina

Context: Vast, grassy plains known as pampas cover much of northern Argentina.

rain forest

Definition: A dense, broad-leaf, largely evergreen forest occurring mostly in tropical regions of the world that receive large amounts of rain

Context: The Amazon region of South America contains one of the world's largest rain forests.

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 link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

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; Environment and Society: Understands how physical systems affect human systems
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts



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:

- People, Places, and Environments
 - Culture
 - Individual Development and Identity
 - 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. South America: Landscape of a Continent (6 min.)

The landscape and climate of South America varies from subtropical regions of the grass-covered Pampas to the cold, high peaks of the Andes. Learn about South America's diverse topography.

II. Brazil's Carnival (4 min.)

The people of Brazil are a blend of cultures and backgrounds but one thing they have in common is Carnival, the most lavish festival in all of South America.

III. Making a Living in Peru (6 min.)

Peru is a country of folk traditions blended with modern technologies. Explore its geographic extremes, rich natural resources, and ever-changing culture.

IV. Santiago: Chile's Capital City (5 min.)

Founded in 1541, Santiago is the capital of Chile and the sixth largest city in South America. Take a tour of this magnificent city, rich with culture and history.

Curriculum Units

1. The Southern Hemisphere

Pre-viewing question

Q: How large is the area of South America in comparison to other continents?

A: South America is the fourth-largest continent on the planet.

Post-viewing question

Q: How are the seasons of the southern hemisphere different from those in the northern hemisphere?

A: The seasons take place during the months opposite those in the northern hemisphere. In South America, most of which lies in the southern hemisphere below the equator, winter takes place from late June to late September, and summer runs from late December to late March.

2. South America's Climates

Pre-viewing question

Q: Why is it important that the Amazon River stays healthy?

A: Answers will vary.



Post-viewing question

Q: What is the seasonal climate of a subtropical region?

A: Subtropical regions have hot, humid, wet summers and cool winters. The pampas of Argentina and Paraguay have a subtropical climate, making this region ideal for growing wheat and soybeans.

3. Blending Cultures in Brazil

Pre-viewing question

Q: Is your town, state, or region known for any festivals or celebrations?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What is Carnival?

A: Celebrated all over the world, Carnival is a party consisting of feasting and dancing, and it marks the beginning of Catholic Lent, the 40 days before Easter. In Rio de Janeiro, Carnival includes magnificent costumes and a world-famous parade.

4. The Resources of Peru

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do people use natural resources to make a living?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What are some natural resources of Peru?

A: The mineral-rich Andes mountain range contains deposits of gold, silver, and copper.

5. Using the Land

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does it mean to live off the land?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why are the highlands of Peru so good for growing asparagus crops?

A: The Peruvian highlands region has an ideal climate and extremely fertile soil. The peaks of the Andes shield the Peruvian highlands from moisture, so farmers use an underground water supply.

6. Touring Santiago

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does Santiago have in common with other large urban areas?

A: Like most cities, Santiago has an extensive public transportation system, public parks, business districts, and venues for art and culture; it also has problems with air pollution.

Post-viewing question

Q: How many people live in Santiago?

A: More than 5 million people, about one-third of Chile's total population, live in Santiago, the sixth largest city in South America.

