

# *South America Today: Bolivia:* Teacher's Guide

**Grade Level:** 7–12

**Curriculum Focus:** Social Studies

**Lesson Duration:** Three class periods

## **Program Description**

*South America Today: Bolivia* – Bolivia is one of the poorest, most isolated, and most intriguing countries in South America. Few places on the continent retain as many elements of their original, indigenous cultures. This program surveys the country's physical and human geography. About two-thirds of Bolivia's population lives on the altiplano, an 80-mile-wide plateau that towers some 12,000 feet above sea level. Most altiplano residents are Aymara- and Quechua-speaking Indians who still travel by reed boats on Lake Titicaca as they did in ancient times. The country's Spanish colonial past is explored with brief tours of Potosí, Sucre, and Cochabamba, cities with lovely Spanish architecture, set in fertile valleys. But it is the altiplano that is the heart of the culture, as it has been for thousands of years. The program concludes with a visit to the ruins of Tiahuanaco, one of the world's oldest cities.

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## **Discussion Questions**

- What are the geographic regions of Bolivia?
  - How does everyday life in Bolivia reflect the region's ancient past?
  - What are Bolivia's major cities, and what do they look like?
  - What are the natural resources of Bolivia, and how are they used?
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## **Lesson Plan**

### *Student Objectives*

- Identify the geographic regions, natural resources, and major ethnic groups of Bolivia.
- Describe how the cultures of ancient civilizations survive in Bolivia today.
- Write a report about a cultural element of Bolivia and how that element of culture has changed throughout history.

### *Materials*

- *South America Today: Bolivia* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player, or access to the program in downloadable or streaming format online
- Computer with Internet access

- Print resources about the geography, climate, resources, and wildlife of Bolivia; the Tiahuanaco and Inca civilizations, Spanish mining in Potosí; Simón Bolívar and the struggle for independence; and modern Bolivian people, places, and customs

## Procedures

1. Review with the class the location of Bolivia (Bolivia shares its northeast border with Brazil, its southern border with Paraguay and Argentina and its western border with Chile and Peru.) Prompted by the students, list the four geographic regions of Bolivia on the chalkboard (altiplano, highlands, Amazon lowlands, and chaco) and ask students to identify the most populated region (the altiplano). Encourage students to volunteer verbal and visual details about the geography of the altiplano. Record their answers. (Students should recall that the altiplano is about 80 miles wide and about 12,000 feet above sea level, located between two branches of the Andes Mountains.) Students should also recall the name of the lake that borders Bolivia and Peru (Lake Titicaca).
2. Ask students to recall and describe elements of Bolivia's geography, history, and culture. The program covers concepts and events in the following order.
  - Physical characteristics of the altiplano
  - War of the Pacific (1879–1883)
  - Aymara (pre-Inca) and Quechua (Inca) Indians
  - Reed boats on Lake Titicaca
  - Everyday life in La Paz, the administrative capital
  - Spanish colonization and founding of La Paz (1540s)
  - Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church
  - Remnants of indigenous religions
  - Subsistence agriculture and coca production
  - Spanish colonial mining at Potosí
  - Mineral industries today: tin, zinc, natural gas
  - Colonial architecture in Sucre, the legal capital
  - Architecture and agriculture in Cochabamba
  - Pre-Inca ruins at Tiahuanaco
3. Ask students to choose one element of everyday life in Bolivia today and to research its history. Examples of topics include Aymara culture, Quechua culture, Spanish colonial architecture, the Roman Catholic Church, agriculture, mining, and archaeology. Challenge students to learn more about how the aspect of culture they have chosen has developed through history. Have them consider these questions: How did Bolivia's location and geography affect the element of

culture? How does the element of culture make use of natural and human resources? What events in history changed the element of culture, and how did these changes take place? In what ways is the element of culture changing today?

4. Have students research the region they have chosen using print and Web resources. The following Web sites are good starting points:
  - A Country Study: Bolivia  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/botoc.html>
  - Bolivian Educational and Cultural Network  
<http://www.llajta.org/index.html>
  - Bolivia's Main Cities  
<http://www.boliviaweb.com/cities/lapaz.htm>
  - Bolivia: Leasing the Rain  
<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/bolivia>
  - Coca and the Congressman: Snapshots of Bolivia  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/cocaleros/photo.html>
  - Archaeology's Interactive Dig: Revealing Ancient Bolivia  
<http://www.archaeology.org/interactive/tiwanaku/>
  - Qala Lampu: The Lake Titicaca Reed Boat Project  
<http://reedboat.org/>
  - Empires Across the Andes  
<http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0206/feature5/>
5. When students have completed their research, ask them to summarize their findings by writing one-page reports. Students might also want to present or perform music or make drawings to illustrate what they have discovered.
6. Have students form teams with students who are reporting on different elements of Bolivia's culture. Ask each team to arrange and present reports that present an overall portrait of the country. Each team's reports should include one example of how geography affects the cultural element and one example of how history affects the cultural element.

## Assessment

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

- 3 points: Students were highly engaged in class discussions; produced complete reports, including all of the requested information; accurately described the region, and cited examples of geographic and historical influences on culture.

- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; produced adequate reports, including most of the requested information; satisfactorily described the region, and cited one example of a geographic or historical influence on culture.
- 1 point: Students participated minimally in class discussions; created incomplete reports with little or none of the requested information; were not able to describe the region or cite examples of geographic or historical influences.

## Vocabulary

### **altiplano** "al-ti-'plä-(')nO

*Definition:* A very high plateau

*Context:* About two-thirds of Bolivia's people live on the altiplano.

### **compulsory**

*Definition:* Required by law

*Context:* Although primary education is compulsory, many Bolivian children do not attend school.

### **coup**

*Definition:* The violent overthrow of a government by a small group

*Context:* Bolivia has endured many military coups throughout its history.

### **de facto**

*Definition:* In fact; actual

*Context:* Although Sucre is the official capital of Bolivia, La Paz is the de facto capital.

### **hydrofoil**

*Definition:* A motorboat that has metal fins for lifting the boat out of the water at high speeds

*Context:* On Lake Titicaca, hydrofoil and reed boats travel side by side.

### **indigenous**

*Definition:* Original or native to a region or environment

*Context:* Over sixty percent of Bolivia's people are members of indigenous groups.

### **mason**

*Definition:* An expert at working in stone

*Context:* The ancient city of Tiahuanaco was constructed by skilled masons.

### **navigable**

*Definition:* Able to be traveled by boat

*Context:* Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake on earth.



**placate**

*Definition:* To soothe, pacify, or calm

*Context:* People make offerings to placate certain gods.

**subsistence agriculture**

*Definition:* Agriculture that provides only the means of survival, without a surplus for sale

*Context:* As in many poor countries, most people in Bolivia depend on subsistence agriculture.

## 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 – Places and Regions: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions
- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature, distribution, and migrations of human populations on Earth's surface

### 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
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Government

### National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE)

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/publication/tutorial/standards/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following NCGE standards.

- Places and Regions – Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

- Human Systems—Standard 10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

## History

The National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California at Los Angeles has developed history standards under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards. The standards were developed with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ssnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards/#TOC>.

This lesson plan addresses the following standards:

- Historical Thinking: Standard 1 – chronological thinking
  - Historical Thinking: Standard 2 – historical comprehension
  - Historical Thinking: Standard 3 – historical analysis and interpretation
  - World History: Era 4, Standard 6 – The rise of centers of civilization in Mesoamerica and Andean South American in the first millennium CE
  - World History: Era 5, Standard 6 – The expansion of states and civilizations in the Americas, from 1000-1500 CE
  - World History: Era 6, Standard 4 – Economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, 1500–1750
  - World History, Era 7, Standard 4 – Patterns of nationalism, state-building, and social reform in Europe and the Americas, 1830–1914
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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](http://www.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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## Credit

Judith Conaway, curriculum writer, editor, and instructional designer