

Unit 1: America the Beautiful

Key Connections:

- Climate and Geography shape the economies of the five regions of the United States.
- The environment of the U.S. has been affected by human factors and natural processes.

Topic One: The Many Maps of the United States

Connections to the unit content: Before students can analyze the connection between geography and human activity, they need to understand how maps are used to learn about a specific area. In Unit One, students gain a basic understanding of world and US geography, and practice reading & interpreting a variety of world and US maps. Students learn to use different types of maps so that they are later equipped to make connections between them.

Key Questions:

- What information do maps tell us about a given area?
 - How do we read a map?
 - Why do we use maps?

Description:

Students engage in reading maps of the world and United States. Students learn how maps are used to illustrate a variety of information about a particular geographic area and interpret a variety of map types. These are prerequisite skills for engaging in Topic 2 as well as future units.

Activities:

- Students read a variety of US maps and fill in the Intro to Maps Graphic Organizer.
- Students complete a gallery walk in groups to compare and contrast different maps of the world and United States. Students record their responses in a graphic organizer..

Topic Two: Regions of the U.S.

Connections to the unit content: Students apply their newly acquired map skills to learn about the five regions of the United States. During the study of each region, students connect regional geography, physical features, and climate to economic activities and culture. By the end of the unit, students have the current day schema to approach a historical study of the United States and make connections between historical events and contemporary regional identities.

Key Questions:

- What is life like for people living in each region of the US?
- How has geography and land influenced the way people live?

Description:

Students investigate the influence of geography on human activity in each of the five regions of the United States. In each regional deep dive, students analyze maps of the region and make connections between physical features, climate, and geography with life for people in the region.

Activities:

- Students answer the question: Which region of the United States would you most like to visit and why? Which region would you least like to visit and why?. They must use evidence from the unit and refer to their maps. Students will connect the geography of a region to life for people living in the region, including economic activity, culture, recreation, etc.

Priority Content and Concepts:

Compare and contrast the physical characteristics within each region, and between regions:

- West: Mountains, coastline, farmland, forest
- Southwest: deserts, canyons, farmland
- Midwest: plains, rivers, farmland
- Southeast: bayous, rivers, coastline, mountain ranges, farmland
- Northeast: coastlines, waterways, natural deep harbor ports

Describe the main natural resources in each region, and their impact on the population and economy of that region

- West: gold/minerals, seafood, timber, seaports on the coast, mining
- Southwest: metals/minerals, grazing land, farm resources, oil, adobe building materials, inland ports
- Midwest: coal mining, agriculture, fertile soil, fur
- Southeast: seafood, oil, agriculture, seaports, rivers, coal, fertile soil
- Northeast: forests, seafood, natural deep harbor seaports, rivers, furs

Your student will be able to:

- Explain what causes erosion, and how erosion has changed the physical characteristics of coastal areas in the U.S.
- Identify natural disasters common to each U.S. region (tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, forest fires, earthquakes, volcanoes, mudslides, severe thunderstorms) and explain why that natural disaster is likely to occur in that region.
- Explain how natural disasters have changed the physical characteristics of the five regions in the U.S.
- Explain how rivers have impacted farmland by contributing fertile soil.
- Explain ways in which humans have altered the land in each of the 5 regions of the U.S. (roads, dams, levees, canals, irrigation systems, waste, pollution, mining, cattle grazing).

Your student will be responsible for

- labeling the 7 continents (Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America), 5 oceans (Pacific, Atlantic, Southern, Arctic, Indian), North Pole, South Pole, and Equator on a blank map.
- naming the 5 regions of the U.S. (West, Midwest, Southwest, Southeast, Northeast), and locate and label them on a map.
- Locating and labeling on a map the major physical features of each U.S. Region, and how these physical features affect the region's population and economy. ○ West: Pacific Ocean, Rocky mountains, Cascade mountains ○ Southwest: Grand Canyon, border with Mexico ○ Midwest: Ohio River, Mississippi River, Great Lakes, Great Plains ○ Southeast: Appalachian mountains, Mississippi River, Gulf Coast/Atlantic Coast ○ Northeast: Atlantic Coast and waterways, Niagara Falls
- Describing the climate of each of the regions of the U.S., and explain how the climate impacts the economy and population of each region.
 - Naming the states that are in each region, using a map.
 - Measuring the distance between places on a map using scale.
- Using a map, determine the approximate longitude and latitude coordinates of teacher selected locations in all 5 regions of the United States.
 - Explain what information maps give us using physical, political, topographic, road, climate, resource, and population maps, and give examples of when each type of map is best used.
 - Proficiently use each feature of a map: title, key/legend, compass rose, cardinal and intermediate directions, and scale.
 - Explain the purpose of latitude and longitude lines.
 - Identify places on the map using latitude and longitude coordinates.
 - Create a key/legend and label/color each region of the U.S. on a map.
 - Explain how physical features limited human migration and settlement (mountains, deserts, and crossing large waterways created barriers to travel and migration before railway technology).
 - Explain how rivers and waterways promoted settlement and migration.