

Community Cousins

Lesson Overview

Students identify and interpret physical regions across Earth's surface by profiling physical characteristics of their own community and comparing them with places elsewhere.

Grade Level(s)

6-12

Duration

2-3 days

Geography Themes

Physical and Human Characteristics

- Physical characteristics include the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere (the realms of solid earth, water, air and life)

Regions: How They Form and Change

- A region has common characteristics
- Common characteristics form general patterns
- Patterns allow analysis of regions

Geography Standards

The geographically informed person knows and understands...

(#4) the physical and human characteristics of places.

(#5) that people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

Materials Needed

For Students:

- World atlases and/or textbooks with thematic maps showing different physical characteristics and processes (See map list in "Preparing the Lesson")
- [Comparison matrix](#)

Main Objectives of the Lesson

Students are expected to:

1. identify and interpret places and regions with different physical characteristics;
2. compare regions to identify similar and different physical characteristics.

Suggested Teaching Procedure

Preparing the Lesson

1. Preview the atlases available (including textbook map collections). Depending upon what is available and the skill level and background of the students, select three or more maps describing physical geographical characteristics and processes to use in the lesson. These maps could include: Landform and elevation, Climate, Temperature (Annual temperature range), Precipitation, Location (inland/coastal), Natural vegetation, Soils, Natural energy resources, Other mineral resources, Other.

Opening the Lesson

1. Introduce the maps and describe briefly what they show, focusing especially on each map legend so that the students will be able to use the maps on their own.
2. Practice map interpretation by asking students to use the mapped information to describe a few places you select.

Developing the Lesson

1. Ask students to create a profile of their community listing the physical characteristics of the region in which it is located. (Alternative: Assign additional or other locations in different regions for analysis in order to have more variation in student work.)

Concluding the Lesson

1. Ask the students to find and report on one or more places outside the United States that share the same physical characteristics as those of their hometown. Permit a few students to discuss the results. Encourage students to draw conclusions based on the comparisons. For examples, do all the places with similar characteristics share similar locations? Do they all share similar climates, natural vegetation, and soil characteristics, but different resources? What factors could explain the similarities and differences?
2. Ask students to speculate on whether people in the places identified have been affected by or have adapted to their environment in the same way. For example, how might they make their living, or what do they eat, wear, and live in?

Extending the Lesson

1. Research the places/regions found to see if people's adaptations to or modifications of their environment are the same or similar to those characterizing the students' area.
2. Write a school in a community within the "look-alike" region, sending a physical and cultural description of your community and invite correspondence to compare the two communities. (If available, explore the possibilities for communicating via Internet.)