

The Great Atlas Scavenger Hunt

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to the information contained in an atlas and ways to find that information.

Grade Level

Grade 3 (The lesson can be adapted for lower as well as higher grades by adjusting the questions on the Worksheet)

Duration

40 minutes

Geography Themes

Location

- Location of places can be described using reference systems

Geography Standards

The geographically informed person knows and understands...

(#1) how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Materials Needed

For Students:

- An atlas for each student or group of students
- An [Atlas Scavenger Hunt Worksheet](#)

Main Objective of the Lesson

Students are expected to:

1. become familiar with the information provided in an atlas and the best ways to locate that information.

Suggested Teaching Procedure

Preparing for the Lesson

1. Obtain a set of atlases for the class, preferably one for each student. Look through the atlas and adapt the Scavenger Hunt Worksheet based on that particular atlas.

Opening the Lesson

1. Ask the students if they know what an atlas is. (It is a collection of maps and geographic information.)
2. Tell them the story of where the name "atlas" came from. Atlas was a giant who, according to Greek mythology, supported the world on his shoulders. In 1595 a Flemish cartographer named Gerardus Mercator published a collection of maps that had the word "atlas" in the title. Now the word atlas has come to mean any collection of maps.

Developing the Lesson

1. Divide the students into pairs. Give each student a Scavenger Hunt Worksheet.
2. Point out the information contained in the table of contents, as well as the index, and direct the students to use these tools. Students should then look through the atlas to find the information requested on the worksheet and mark the appropriate answers.
3. When the hunt is complete, go over the answers with the class.
4. Give the students some specific scenarios for which an atlas map would be useful, and allow them to find the appropriate map. For example, say, "I am curious about which countries border the Mediterranean Sea" or "I want to know how many people live in Mexico." In each instance encourage the students to use the table of contents or the index to find page number instead of flipping through the atlas to locate a map. Continue to give scenarios until the students are comfortable with the proper use of the atlas. In each case, have students locate the appropriate map and then supply the information.

Concluding the Lesson

1. Students share an interesting fact they learned from the scavenger hunt and share their favorite part of the atlas.

Extending the Lesson

1. Bring several different types of atlases for students to browse through, such as a road atlas or an historical atlas. Let the students page through them and note their similarities and differences.