

Geography and Culture of the Andes

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: South America

Lesson Duration: 2 or 3 class periods

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

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Geography of South America*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Segment One: South America: Landscape of a Continent
- Segment Three: Making a Living in Peru
- Segment Four: Santiago: Chile's Capital City

- 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.
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](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>

