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The Deep Impact: How Our Physical World Impacts Our Culture

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Introduction

I am a sixth grade Science and Social Studies teacher at Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy in New Haven, Connecticut. My classroom community consists of a diverse population of students both culturally and academically. The cultural diversity of the 15 learners in our homeroom class is, 11 Hispanic or Latino decent, 3 are of African American decent and one is Middle Eastern. Academically, the class population consists of 3 students carrying Individualized Education Plans, IEP's, 2 Students who have Learning Health Plans, 504's and 3 students who are Multi Language Learners, MLs. My students have various needs based on their skill levels and behaviors. Roberto Clemente is a project-based learning magnet school. Constructive learning is fundamental to the magnet theme. All students have the ability to learn through a student-lead, hands on approach. This learning approach will create meaningful connections with the curriculum to help clarify and create lasting understanding.

Our classroom is built on strong community connection. We start our mornings off with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) time which helps create a safe learning environment daily so that students feel received by one another and can safely explore ideas without fear of ridicule. Although SEL time is not the focus of this unit, it does influence the learning environment that is paramount in our class. I find that students who participate in SEL trust their peers and are more likely to take risks and explore ideas than those who are chronically absent or tardy.

This unit is being developed to explore how culture is shaped by the natural world. Through critical thinking learning activities, students will acquire information that will create an understanding of how our cultures are influenced by the location and availability of resources. When considering location, we must examine what type of land features are present, weather and climate, food availability and water resource availability. We must also consider how the resources contained within the land influence why a place was settled and what elements from nature are used for progressive economic growth. The focus country of this unit will be on Venezuela. Many of our students come from South America and this unit is designed to be culturally relevant to our learners. I also am focusing on Venezuela because its proximity to plate boundaries make the location intriguing. These plate boundaries have caused the natural landscape to form in a way that will keep learners interested and provide a good example for why settlers might choose one location over another. Additionally,

Venezuela is projected to be the first country to lose all of its glaciers due to climate change. The country of Venezuela is located on the northern tip of South America, just north of the equator. According to NASA, Venezuela's Humboldt Glacier, has been in decline for a long time due to a combination of human-caused global warming and warmer temperatures exacerbated by El Niño. In May 2024, scientists found that the glacier had melted much faster than expected and was now too small to flow under its own weight, downgrading it from a glacier to an ice field. Satellite images show that the glacier, which was once 450 hectares (more than 1,100 acres) wide, is now only 2 hectares (slightly less than 5 acres). Using Venezuela as a model we will be able to determine how culture is affected by the physical world around us.

Rationale

We as educators must teach about culture and how it interlaces with science so that we can help students develop empathy and respect for various perspectives, and aid them in navigating a multicultural society. Our world is continuously linked through technology and because of this our students need to be global competitors for occupations. To do this, we must teach them to celebrate diversity between one another. Learning about cultures and how they develop can also help students develop critical thinking skills. By exploring different perspectives, students can learn to look at issues from multiple angles. All cultures are shaped by the natural world. By teaching the foundational reasons why there are differences in cultures can help dispel prejudicial views and prevent them from forming, thus, break down stereotypes and misconceptions.

Objective

Students will identify, describe, and create geographic representations of a country of choice in one of the following projects. The project should include the primary characteristics of the region and identify the significance of geography in their development. Ideally, students can present their research in one of the following ways:

1. Draw and cut out your country on posterboard. The whole map will be sectioned out with the project requirements.
2. Create a flip book with a map of your country on the front. Inside will have the project requirements.
3. Use a manilla folder. Place the map of your country on the front. The inside will have the project requirements
4. A comic book with the character hailing from a particular area
5. Infographic (scaffolded)

Project Requirements

1. An outline of the political border of the country.
2. Clearly state the name of the country and the capital city.
3. Identify the latitude and longitude of the capital city and mark it with a star.

4. Identify on the map provided where your country was 200 million years ago on the super continent of Pangea.
5. Determine the nearest continental plate and fault lines of your country.
6. Describe the landscape of the country i.e. mountains, plains, island, etc.
7. Research what kind of food is available or farmed in the country i.e. livestock, seafood, wheat, etc.
8. Describe the climate of the country and what sort of natural disasters occur there.
9. Research what kind of natural resources are available i.e. oil, coal, minerals. This will determine what sort of jobs were available 100 years ago.
10. Write a four-paragraph essay as to how the culture of your country of choice was influenced by the natural world. Define culture, and identify the physical characteristics unique to your country that influence the

Background Information

Early Settlements

When establishing a settlement, people must consider the physical needs of their community first. Basic necessities like water, food and protection from elements are of the highest priority. Climate will also have a large impact on a potential settlement. The type of climate will affect the crops that can be grown, and what sort of harsh conditions will the settlement be subjected to. Each land area settled has favorable characteristics that made early settlers want to establish a community in that region.

For example, the city of Caracas, Venezuela was settled just behind the Coastal Cordillera Mountain range. There is a small patch of land on the northern, coastal side of this range. Thus, the city was built in the rift valley just south of the range. According to Medina, José Ramón and Minkel, C.W.. "Caracas". The city of Caracas was settled in 1557 when a ranch was established in the valley in 1557 by Francisco Fajardo, the son of a Spanish captain and an Indian chief's daughter, and in 1561 Juan Rodríguez Suárez founded a town on the site of the ranch. This location provided the settlers with opportunity to gain fresh water from the mountains, grow food in the plains and have protection from possible oceanic weather conditions. In addition to the city being protected from harsh weather conditions, the people were protected from pirate attacks. These attacks would have targeted the natural resources grown there such as gold and cocoa which play a vital role in the economic structure of the country.

Culture

Culture is defined by National Geographic as "The shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses, place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviors, art, literature, and music". I believe that our natural, physical world impacts culture a great deal. Fig. 1 gives a map of the characteristics of culture. Students should explore connections between these characteristics and the physical world. We can use higher order thinking questions(H.O.T) to connect these traits. We cannot exclusively identify characteristics of culture without understanding or respecting the foundation and origination of said characteristics.



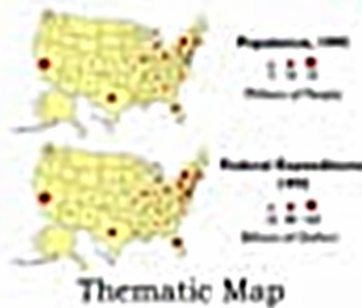
Fig.1 www.adorngeo.com/2-changing-identities-and-cultures.html

For example, if we are to classify food as a cultural trait, we must understand that certain cultures will have access to particular food grown in that region. If the country is composed of islands, then their traditional food will contain more seafood than a country that is located inland. A similar conclusion can be drawn about the material available to create musical instruments or housing/structures. Here in the Northeast, we use a great deal of wood to create our homes. However, in parts of the world they might have more clay to make bricks with so homes would be constructed differently. Another factor to consider is the traditional dress of a culture. A culture that is located near the equator will naturally have a different weight than a culture located in a higher elevation.

Types of Maps

Types of Maps

- There are many different types of maps to show different types of information. Some of them are described below.
 - Political Maps
 - Physical Maps
 - Thematic Maps
 - Topographic Maps



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Fig 2. <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/types-of-maps-26047481/26047481>

As part of the unit of study, students will be required to understand the difference between maps. Various maps show different information. Students will need to understand what map they will need to get the information they need. Fig.2 shows a representation of various kinds of maps that you may want to use to determine the differences.

Political Map: Shows the manmade borders of countries. These maps can also include highways and roads.

Physical Map: Is a map that depicts the physical features of an area. This map will include mountains, rivers, lakes, and continents. Often times there will be a correlation between borders on a political map and physical features such as rivers.

Thematic Maps: this type of map will show a theme. The map will have a title that will indicate what the viewer is looking at. These types of maps can include in this unit maps of natural resources in an area or a map of natural disasters.

Topographic or Raised Relief Map: This map will show features such as mountains, valleys and plains. This is a good map to reference when trying to understand the landscape of a country.

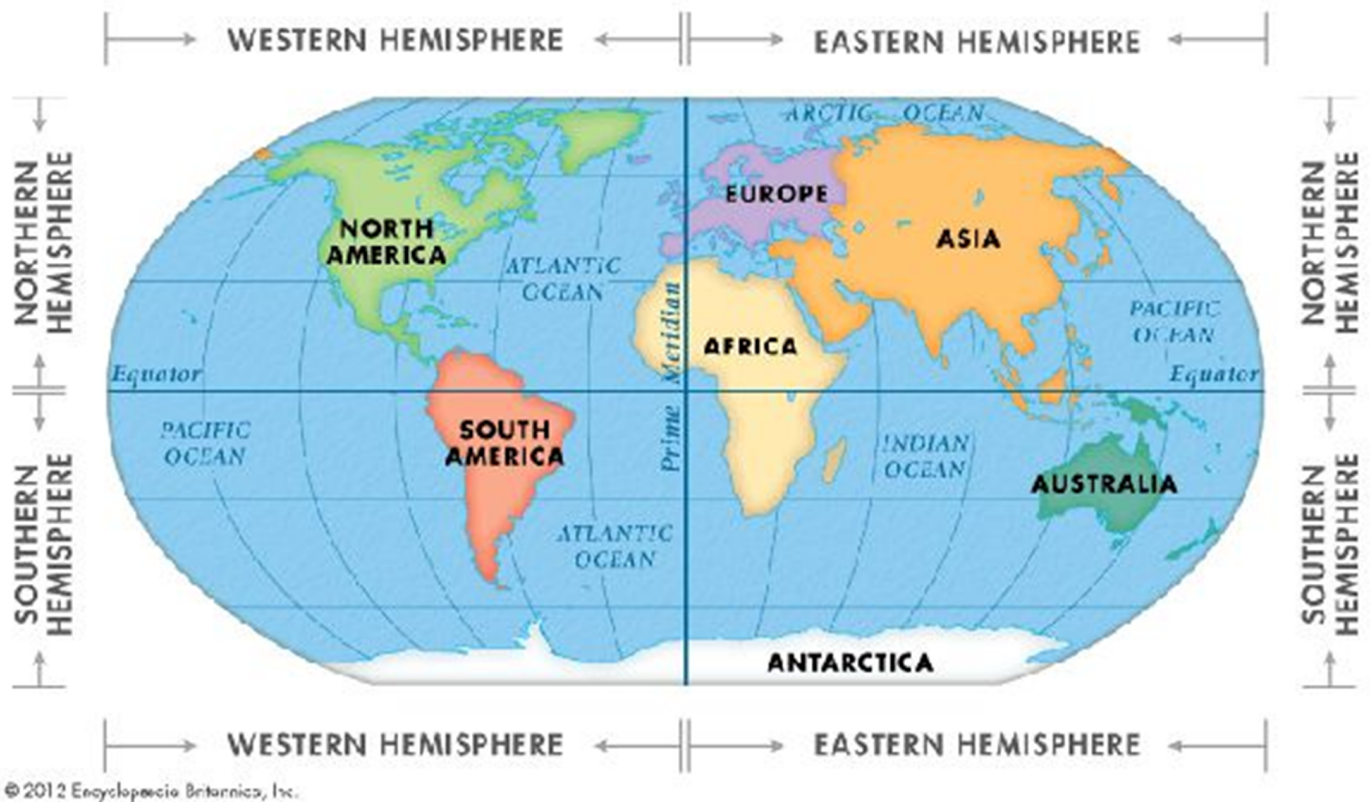


Fig 3. <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/assembly/view/87294>

Key Map Features

In order for students to fully understand how to utilize and create a map of their own, they must understand the key features of a map. We must develop map reading skills which include identifying the Equator and Prime Meridian. The Equator is the line of latitude that cuts the Earth in half. The Prime Meridian is the line of longitude that cuts the Earth in half lengthwise. Together these two lines create two pairs of hemispheres. Once the Equator and Prime Meridian is traced, students can identify the hemispheres. The pairs of hemispheres are the four quadrants of the globe. A hemisphere can be defined as the area on one side of any circle that has been drawn around the Earth and divides the Earth into two similar halves. Two pairs of different hemispheres are generally considered by geographers. These are the Northern and Southern, and Eastern and Western hemispheres. This is easier to do when a compass rose is used to identify North, South, East and West on the map. Understanding the basic layout of the globe will help students understand where in the physical world they are talking about.

Students should be able to understand that the equator is located at zero degrees. Latitude and longitude lines are used to chart a location on Earth using a grid system of horizontal and vertical lines called graticule lines. Latitude lines, also known as parallels, run horizontally and measure distance north or south from the equator, which has physical basis in connection to Earth's daily rotation. Longitude lines, also known as meridians, run vertically from pole to pole and measure distance east or west from Greenwich, England, which is the [arbitrarily selected] prime meridian and corresponds to 0°.

Landscape of a Country

The type of landscape a country has will impact the evolution of culture. This will impact the food a culture is

known for, the kind of clothes a culture wears and the type of minerals that are used in their traditional art. It will also determine what kind of materials are used for building structures.

In regards to food, vegetables like carrots, parsnips, turnips, radishes, and beets, as well as leafy greens, peas, broccoli, and cauliflower can grow well in the mountains. Lettuce, apples and herbs can also thrive in the mountains. In tropical climates, plants that grow above ground or on trees will be more advantageous. The food grown will need to be able to grow in warm, moist conditions. Also, the soil conditions will impact the food grown. It will have to be soil that is well draining soil. Food such as dates, black beans, agave, and couscous will be found in desert regions.

In regards to materials available to use for building structures, forested areas will certainly have lumber readily available. Those areas located in desert or hot areas will probably use more clay and brick in their structures. In addition, areas that have natural resources such as iron ore will also have a greater opportunity for creating structures out of steel. This will also impact the countries economic resources.

Natural Disasters

A natural disaster is defined by the Stafford Act as, any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought) or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood or explosion, in any part of the United States. These are violent storms or occurrences that cause significant damage and are outside human control. They are caused by the forces of nature. There are many types of natural disasters. Natural disasters will impact the way a settlement uses the land they live on and vice versa. For this unit more focus will be placed on natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes than other natural disasters mentioned.

Land is constantly changing. It is important to understand that earthquakes and volcanos [mostly] occur at the boundaries between of two tectonic plates interacting with each other. There are three different kinds of plate boundaries; divergent, convergent and transform. Depending on what kind of boundary is in the area will determine the landscape of the country. Fig. 4 offers a visual guide to how these boundaries interact with one another.

Divergent

Two tectonic plates move away from each other, which can cause mild to moderate earthquakes and tend to have many basaltic volcanoes. Magma rises from the mantle to the surface and solidifies to create new oceanic crust. The Mid-Atlantic Ridge is an example of a divergent plate boundary.

Convergent

Two plates move toward each other and collide. If the plates are of equal density, they usually push up against each other to form a mountain chain. If they are of unequal density, one plate usually sinks beneath the other in a process called subduction. Subduction can cause deep ocean trenches and volcanoes to form. About 80% of earthquakes occur at convergent boundaries including the most severe shocks ever recorded.

PLATE BOUNDARIES



Fig. 4 <https://geographicbook.com/types-of-plate-boundaries/>

Transform

Two plates slide past each other horizontally. Lithosphere is neither created nor destroyed at transform boundaries. Many transform boundaries are found on the sea floor, connecting segments of mid-ocean ridges; but some rise onto the land. The San Andreas Fault in California is a well-known example of a transform plate boundary, and is responsible for many of California's earthquakes.

Pangea

Pangea was a supercontinent that included nearly all landmasses that are on Earth. All the modern continents fit together to form one giant continent that was surrounded by a global ocean called Panthalassa. The existence of Pangea allowed animals to migrate between land masses, which led to the evolution of different species and unique climates. According to Britannica online, German meteorologist Alfred Wegener was the first scientist to propose the existence of Pangea in 1912, creating his theory of continental drift. Wegener noticed that fossils and similar rock formations were found across continents in ways that wouldn't be possible if the continents were in their current locations

Fig. 5 shows an example of what the super continent of Pangea looked like originally. Over the course of 200 million years due to continental drift, the super continent broke apart.

As the Earth's land masses broke apart and collided this caused earthquakes and volcanos. Depending on the type of fault line the land has, will affect the physical landscape.

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

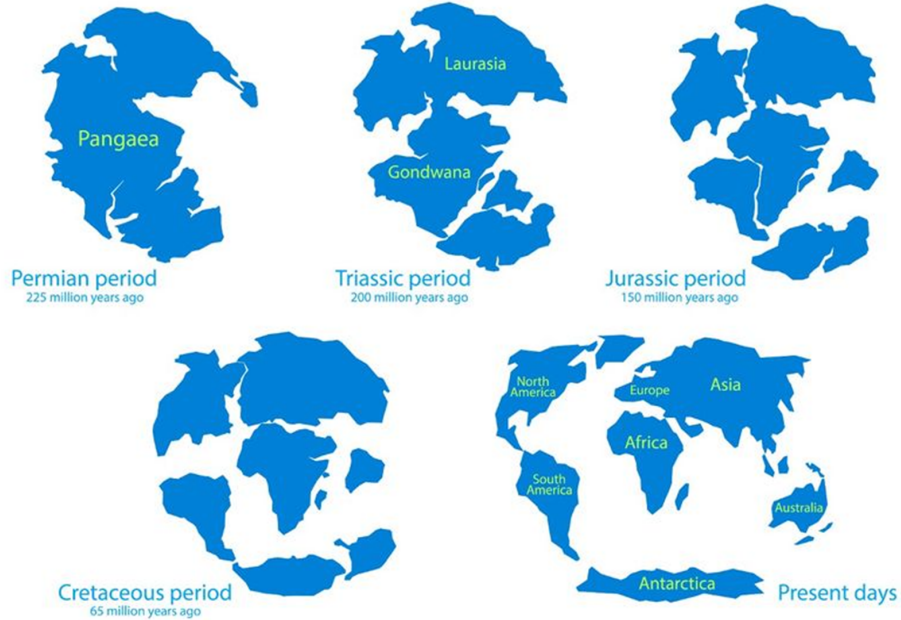


Fig 5. <https://www.livescience.com/38218-facts-about-pangea.html>

Learning Activities

All learning activities are designed to be student led.

Lesson One- Defining the Characteristics of Culture Gallery Walk

Students will need to determine a working definition of what culture is. To do this, I will divide students into groups of three or four. They will work around the room on chart paper. The chart will be divided in half. The top half will have the prompt “Characteristics of Culture”. The bottom half will have the prompt “Culture is defined as...” Students will work collaboratively to determine at least 6 cultural traits, more is encouraged. Then they will travel around the room and look at their peers’ charts and see if inspiration comes from others. They will then return to their own chart and add ideas. Next, while still working in groups they will determine what a proper definition of culture is. They will work through a definition on their charts under the second prompt. We will come together as a class and determine the characteristics and definition of culture. During this activity, students should practice Accountable Talk. This is an example of how students can disagree or add to one another’s thoughts. This chart should be up in the room already and the students will already be familiar with it from SEL.

Lesson Two- How does the Natural World Influence Culture?

Students will participate in a Question Formulation Technique (QFT). This technique is a process that allows students to generate questions about a topic that will guide their instruction. The objective is for students to

generate questions about what information they want to know more about that will bridge science and social studies. The student generated questions will determine the focus of the unit.

Steps to the QFT

1. Place chart paper around the room for each group or topic you want to learn about. Write a Question Focus (QFocus) at the top of each paper.
 - Latitude/longitude and culture
 - Plate tectonics and culture
 - Landscape and culture
 - Food and water availability and culture
 - Natural resources and culture
2. Divide students into groups. Using the Question Focus (the topic), generate as many questions as possible. Write every single question down in your group for 5 minutes. Do not censor any questions.
3. Place a "C" next to closed ended questions, put an "O" next to open-ended questions
4. Now go through and change open ended questions to closed ended and closed questions to open.
5. Prioritize the questions beginning with 1. Which questions are the best ones.
6. Finally discuss with your group which questions will help guide your new learning.
7. Determine whole class which questions will be the driving questions of the unit from each topic

Lesson Three- Political, Physical, Thematic especially geology maps and Topographical or Raised Relief Maps

Student groupings will be distributed at least 3 random maps to examine with their group. They will determine the characteristics of each of their maps. With guidance from the teacher, the students will create a working definition of each kind of map. The goal of this lesson is for students to understand what features different maps can show, what kind of maps are used based on the information needed. Students will also understand that political maps that show borders and cities are very different from raised relief maps that will show the physical features of the land such as mountains and plains. Students will share out their new learning.

Lesson Four- Map Skills

Students will understand what a compass rose is and why it is important in navigation. We will use a flat map of the world to identify where the compass rose is and label north, south, east and west. Students will then find the Equator and Prime Meridian and mark it completely with a dry erase marker. Next, we will discuss the hemispheres and label those correctly. The teacher will lead a discussion on how to find an exact location on the Earth's surface. Students will generate ideas and the teacher will model whole group. Finally, each group will be given a set of coordinates Students will review and understand the hemispheres and important lines of latitude (equator) and longitude (prime meridian). Students will then focus on the main skill of the lesson which is how to find a specific location on earth using latitude and longitude. They will then practice finding locations using latitude and longitude coordinates by working with a partner to "Land on A Continent" (similar to the game Battleship). This is a multidisciplinary lesson that students will use skills obtained in math. Learners should be able to identify the relationship between quadrants and plotting x,y intercepts.

Lesson Five- Pangea and Plate Tectonics

In this lesson, students will learn about the super continent Pangea. They will need to understand this concept

in order to make a prediction in their essay about where their country might be located in the future. This lesson will also gain understanding on geologic patterns in the Earth's crust. First students will have a short turn and talk to determine what they already know about Pangea. Each group will share out information. We will also write down any questions that come up and hold them in the parking lot. We will begin by watching a video about Pangea. Students will then explore what they think happens when continents collide with each other. Students will be broken into 3 groups. Divergent, convergent and transform boundaries. They will research using texts to conduct a close read as a group to determine what their vocabulary term is. Students will complete a vocabulary word mapping for each kind of boundary. The word mapping worksheet will consist of four boxes which the students will identify the kind of boundary they are defining, draw or write down the characteristics of that boundary, construct a definition, then find the definition in the textbook.

Lesson Six- Climate and Natural Disasters

Students will review the difference between climate and weather. Using a globe, students will identify the areas on the globe where it is warmest and coolest and explore reasons why. In their groups, students will work together to research what natural disasters occur in their country of interest. Events such as tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. They will be able to relate these events back to plate boundaries. This is also a cultural characteristic. Students will be expected to form an opinion in their paper if they would want to live in their country based on the possibility of some of these natural disasters and explain why.

Lesson Seven- Landscapes of Countries and Food Availability

Now that students understand how and why mountains and rift valleys form, we can move onto identifying them on a map. Using Google Earth, Students will look closely at the landscape of their country of choice. They will determine if there are mountains, rift valleys and/or plains. They will identify if the mountains or valleys are on a plate boundary. Many countries will have a variety of these features. Students will determine how each of these features will affect the lifestyle of the people who live there. Due to the nature of the landscape, students will also be able to determine what kind of food is available for the people to live on. Is the country an island or on the coast? If so, culturally seafood would be prevalent in their diet. Is there a great deal of farmland or rice fields? The kind of food that is grown will impact the food that is associated with the culture.

Lesson Eight- Natural Resources

Students will use Natural Resource Maps to determine what resources occur naturally in their country of study. Using a computer, students will research what are the main exports in the country. This is one of the ways that countries make money and helps determine their economic growth. Many countries will have natural gas, oil or minerals that they mine. Using a thematic map, students will determine what minerals are in the ground of their country such as iron, oil, gold, aluminum or copper, this impacts what kind of jobs are available and what exports the country has. Students will need to understand how to represent these natural resources on a map using a map key or legend.

Performance Task

The performance task will be a cartography project highlighting areas of culture that are influenced by the natural world. Cartography is the study of map making. Students will create their own maps of a country of their choice. Highlighted in their project will be the characteristics of their country. The capital showing latitude and longitude. The project will also include a four-paragraph opinion essay on whether they would

want to live in their country of interest. They will include elements from each lesson that highlight how the culture is impacted by the natural world.

Student Reading List

Giles Laroche, "If You Lived Here, Houses Around The world"

Tomasz Dabrowski, "Costumes Around the World: Traditional Clothing Around the World"

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

Social Studies

Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World

GEO 6-7.1

Construct maps to represent and explain the pattern of cultural and environmental characteristics in our world.

GEO 6-7.2

Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions, and changes in their environmental characteristics.

Human-Environment Interaction: Places, Regions, and Culture

GEO 6-7.3

Explain how cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people.

GEO 6-7.4

Analyze the cultural and environmental characteristics that make places both similar to and different from one another.

GEO 6-7.5

Explain the connections between the physical and human characteristics of a region and the identity of individuals and cultures living there.

Science

Earth and Space Systems

Curriculum Unit 24.02.04

MS ESS 1-4

students will construct an explanation based on evidence from rock strata

MS ESS 2-1

Students will focus on using evidence to construct an explanation of how geoscience processes have changed Earth's surface at varying times.

MS ESS 2-2

Construct an explanation based on evidence for how geoscience processes have changed Earth's surface at varying time and spatial scales

ELA

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4

Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.A

Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.B

Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.A

Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.B

Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.D

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Math

5.G.2 or 5.G.A.2

Represent real-world and mathematical problems by graphing points in the first quadrant

Vocabulary

- Culture
- Political Map
- Topographical Map
- Raised Relief Map
- Physical Map
- Latitude
- Longitude
- Hemispheres
- Compass Rose
- Equator
- Prime Meridian
- Mountains
- Rift Valley
- Plains
- Natural Resources
- Pangea
- Earthquakes
- Tsunamis

- Volcanic Eruption
- Divergent Plate Boundary
- Convergent Plate Boundary
- Transform Plate Boundary
- Exports
- Economy
- Map Legend

Materials for Classroom Use

- Computers
- Student Notebooks
- Chart Paper
- Depth of knowledge question wheel
- Cornell Note Template
- KWL Chart
- Vocabulary Worksheet
- Battleship Game for Latitude and Longitude
- Dry Erase Markers
- Globes
- Physical Laminated Maps
- Political Laminated Maps
- Map of Pangea
- Colored Pencils
- Smart Board
- Highlighter
- Poster board/poster paint
- Rulers

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<https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/political-and-physical-maps.html>

[https://www.fema.gov/about/glossary/m#:~:text=44%20CFR%20206.111%3B%20\)%20As,in%20any%20part%20of%20the](https://www.fema.gov/about/glossary/m#:~:text=44%20CFR%20206.111%3B%20)%20As,in%20any%20part%20of%20the)

<https://www.amnh.org/explore/ology/earth/power-of-plate-tectonics/pangaea>

Link to Professor David Evans from Yale

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UeeSYi0CeYupq0qO6IOVQbooybD3PGbc>

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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