Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.): Looking at the Boundaries of States and Locations of State Capitals

Students learn that the boundaries of states and the location of state capitals are due to physical or human features.

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Grade Level: 5th
Duration: 2 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT ONE: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS
1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS
4. The physical and human characteristics of places

Arizona Geography Strand

Concept 1: The World in Spatial Terms
PO 5. Identify each state on a U.S. map.

Concept 2: Places and Regions
PO 2. Describe the geographic characteristics of a state in the United States with the assistance of maps, the internet, atlases, and other reference materials.

Other Arizona Standards

ELA Common Core Standards
Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards
Reading
Informational Text
Key Ideas and Details
5.RI.3 Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Writing
Production and Distribution of Writing
5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

AZ5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., formal letters, recipes, experiments, notes/messages, labels, timelines, graphs/tables, procedures, invitations, envelopes) in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

Overview

The United States has 50 stories as to how and why the state boundaries are what they are. And each state has a story about why the capital is located in a certain part of the state.

Purpose
In this lesson, students will learn that human and physical features account for locations of state boundaries as well as the location of state capitals. Students will also practice locating the states of the United States.

**Materials**
- Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.) map
- Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.) worksheet and Answer Key
- Computers or hand held devices
- Internet
- Atlases (optional)

**Objectives**
The student will be able to:

1. identify each of the 50 states on a map
2. analyze a map to determine the significance of human and physical features
3. identify patterns in human and physical features

**Procedures**

*Prerequisite Skills: Students should be studying and learning the locations of the 50 states. There is no intent to hold students responsible for memorizing the state capitals in this lesson.

If in fourth grade students did not learn about their state or location of state capital, you may need to alter the beginning activity. For AZ teachers you can use a lesson called *It’s Where?? A Look at the Location of Our First Arizona Territorial Capital and Why It Was Located There* prior to this lesson.

**SESSION ONE**
1. Ask students to recall how Arizona (or your state) got its boundaries and describe the location of the capital.
2. Remind students that geography is looking at the spatial organization of human and physical features. “So today, we are going to analyze human and physical features and learn more about the United States.”
4. First have students label the states without assistance from computers or atlases.
5. As a whole group activity, complete sections 1 and 2 on the worksheet.
6. Explain the map work in section 3. While the map is fairly clear in marking rivers and mountains, allow students to use the internet or atlases to determine the boundaries. At end of class period, have students share answers.

**SESSION TWO**
7. Ask students what they learned from yesterday’s map work. Reinforce that state boundaries have human and physical features.
8. Have students (or groups of students) “draw out of a hat” a state capital to research. Have students use hand held devices or computers to research why this city was selected as a state capital.
9. After about 25 minutes, have students (or student groups) share their research. Create categories on the whiteboard to tally reasons for location sites (near a river, earliest settlement, center of state, center of economy, on a major trail, has a port of entry, etc.). Some capitals may have more than one reason for the capital to be situated in this location.

10. Explain the writing prompt. Have students complete it as homework or in the time remaining.

**Assessment**

**Geography**
Students will complete Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.) map work and worksheet with an accuracy of 90% or higher accuracy to be considered mastery.

**Reading**
Students will complete the Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.) Part 4 of the worksheet with an accuracy of 100% or higher to be considered mastery.

**Writing**
Students will score 16 points or higher on the writing assignment to be considered mastery.

**Extensions**

A similar assignment could be made for national capitals.

Have students look for other patterns such as major cities on rivers or railroad lines.

Add oceans and large lakes as another natural feature. Have students recount the number of states with 1, 2, or 3 colors. Compare this
information to the first count using only rivers and mountains.

Sources

Boundaries “R” Us (Are U.S.) map
http://geoalliance.asu.edu/azqa/