

5 Themes of Geography

A Basis for Understanding Geography

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Grade Level 5-High School
Duration 1-2 class periods

National Geography Standards

Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

Essential Element 2: Places and Regions

4. The physical and human characteristics of places

Essential Element 4: Human Systems

9. The characteristics, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

10. The characteristics, distribution and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

Essential Element 5: Environment and Society

14. How human actions modify the physical environment

15. How physical systems affect human systems

AZ Standards

This lesson applies to multiple grade levels and involves researching for information and then summarizing it. This is an example of the ELA standards that would be assessed by this lesson.

ELA

Reading

Informational Text

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

5.RI.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

5.RI.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

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.

Arizona Social Science Standards

There is no AZ Social Science Standard that says students must know the 5 Themes of Geography; however, the vocabulary of the 5 Themes is within the state standards. For example:

The use of geographic representations and tools help individuals understand their world.

5.G1.1 Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in the United States. Key concepts include but are not limited to physical and human features of the United States, the regions of the United States and their characteristics, **location** of major events, the growth of the United States through territorial expansion, demographic changes, and the states and their capitals

Human-environment interactions are essential aspects of human life in all societies.

5.G2.1 Describe how natural and human-caused changes to habitats or climate can impact our world.

Examining human population and movement helps individuals understand past, present, and future conditions on Earth's surface.

5.G3.1 Use key historical events with geographic tools to analyze the causes and effects of environmental and technological events on human settlements and **migration**.

Global interconnections and spatial patterns are a necessary part of geographic reasoning.

7.G4.1 Analyze cultural and environmental characteristics among various **places** and **regions** of the world.

Overview

A study of geography begins with knowing where cultural features and physical features are located. But a study of geography also requires knowledge of

why these people or physical features are located in particular places and how those places influence our lives.

To provide a framework for such explorations, geographers have developed the five themes of geography. By using these themes as a basis for understanding geographic information, we can gain a better appreciation of cultural and environmental similarities and differences.

Purpose

In this series of lessons, students will learn and apply the five themes of geography so that their study of geography can begin. Once students have mastered this geographic terminology, then students can correctly use these themes to identify how the earth is organized spatially.

Materials

- What is Geography? PowerPoint
- Overview of the Five Themes of Geography (Optional)
- Five Themes of Geography graphic organizer and Answer Key
- Postcards from various places and regions and/or use alternate assignment with Postcards PowerPoint.
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- 5 Themes Quiz and Answer Key
- Guidelines for Postcard Assignment
- Identifying Photos—Practice on the 5 Themes of Geography
- Blank index cards
- Colored markers
- Internet, almanacs, other reference materials

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Identify and apply the terms: location, place, movement, human environment interaction, and region.
2. Identify that the use of the five themes of geography is one way to organize the world spatially.
3. Draw information from a variety of sources.
4. Organize important information in a graphic organizer.
5. Produce a written message.

Procedures

Prior to the Lesson: Gather several hundred postcards so small groups will have at least 10 postcards to identify by their theme.

Note: This lesson should follow a lesson on What is Geography? The PowerPoint presentation is included with this lesson. The script for the PowerPoint is included in the notes section for each slide.

SESSION ONE and TWO

Prior to this Session: Students should be aware of the definition and applications of geography. A What is Geography? PowerPoint is included in this lesson and can be used before teaching the 5 Themes.

1. Begin the session by recalling that the definition of geography includes looking at the world in spatial terms. So, what are these spatial terms?
2. Distribute the Five Themes graphic organizer. Instruct students to take notes on their graphic organizer as the themes are discussed. Project the Five Themes of Geography graphic organizer Answer Key and discuss each theme.
3. Have a variety of postcards from various places and regions. Divide the students into small groups and give each group 10 postcards. Tell the students that they are to identify which of the 5 themes is the strongest (has the most visual evidence) shown by the postcard. When most of the groups are done, have the groups share with the rest of the class what theme they picked. Have the other class members show thumbs up or thumbs down if they agree or disagree with the group's analysis. Remember: More than one answer is possible as long as the explanation is plausible so you become the judge on what would be the best theme(s).
4. Or you can show the Postcards PowerPoint and have students volunteer which theme is the strongest based on the visual evidence.
5. Now give each group 5 blank index cards and colored markers. Each group will use reference materials or internet to create a postcard for each of the 5 themes of **one** state, place, or region. See example below. (This can also be done as homework.)

An example using **Arizona** as the one place or region follows:

On picture side:

Card 1 Place: drawing of the Grand Canyon or a cactus

Card 2 Location: map of Arizona showing nearby states or latitude and longitude

Card 3 Region: map of the Southwest or drawing of the Sonoran Desert

Card 4 Human Environment Interaction: drawing of people water skiing or an open pit mine

Card 5 Movement: drawing of immigrants coming to Arizona or map of major highways

On the writing side:

The students would identify the picture in a sentence or two as if this postcard is being sent to a friend. Student should address the card appropriately. (Each student in the group with the same address and recipient.) Hint: These postcards make a nice room display.

6. Have the groups share their postcards.
7. Give 5 Themes Quiz
8. Remember to refer to these 5 Themes as the year progresses.

Assessment

ELA and Geography

Cards can be graded for neatness and whether the theme was portrayed accurately. The Scoring Guide on the Guidelines for Postcard Assignment can be

used for assessing the cards for reading and writing. Mastery will be considered 80% or higher.

Geography

The 5 Themes Quiz can be used as a geography assessment. Mastery is considered 80% or higher.

Extensions

Another way to practice the 5 themes is to gather slides or create a power point of photos that illustrate the 5 themes. Have the students categorize the pictures by the themes. A twist on this would be to give the students the photos and let them create the power point.

Sources

Overview of the Five Themes of Geography
TC Toolkit, National Geographic Society, p.107-109.