

**National Council for Geographic Education
Curriculum & Instruction Committee
Geography Club**

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Eighth Month Activities

Geography for Life: National Geography Standards

The World in Spatial Terms

Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information

Standard 3: How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

Places and Regions

Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

Human Systems

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

Standard 12: The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement

Environment and Society

Standard 14: How human actions modify the physical environment

I. Warm-up Activity: Map Scraps

Examine each "Map Scrap" and try to determine the locations. Use an atlas and other reference materials to answer the questions.

Map Scrap 8-1



Map: National Geographic Society

Questions:

1. What is the name of the peninsula that is partially shown on this map?
2. In what country is it located?
3. Name the sea that lies west of the peninsula?
4. What island country lies southwest of the tip of the peninsula?
5. The peninsula's many active volcanoes indicate that it lies on what well-known "ring" of volcanic and earthquake activity around the Pacific Ocean?

Map Scrap 8-2



Map: National Geographic Society

Questions:

1. Which two Asian countries are shown on this map?
2. Name the capital cities of these two countries.
3. The mouth of what river lies near the capital city shown on the map?
4. What large bay lies to the west of the region shown on the map?
5. If you traveled directly north from this region, which large country would you reach?

II. Activity: A Capital Idea!

Note to teachers/sponsors: The activities that follow are suggestions. You are free to adapt them as you need to, so they are useful to the ages and abilities of your group. Feel free to “pick and choose” from these activities. Also, use them as springboards to other activities that fit the interests of your students. You may also want to incorporate a field study experience, if applicable.

Introduction

Mention geography to some people and they immediately think of memorizing the names and locations of countries and their capital cities. This mistaken notion of geography still persists. The activities this month will examine national capitals, but it will go beyond location. They will lead students to analyze the “Where?” and “Why there?” of capital cities, the characteristics of capital cities, and some historic and current examples of capital cities.

Materials needed:

Political map of the United States
Political map of the world and continents

Websites

CIA World Factbook

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

World Capital Cities - Population

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0855603.html>

United Nations - Population of capital cities and cities of 100,000 and more inhabitants

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/densurb/urban.aspx>

The “Capital” entry in Wikipedia has several links to lists of capital cities on a variety of topics

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_city

Capital or Capitol?

Capital refers to the principal city or town associated with its government. It is almost always the city which physically encompasses the offices and meeting places of the seat of government and fixed by law. The word capital is derived from the Latin *caput* meaning "head."

Capitol refers to the building where government-business is chiefly conducted. For example, the United States Capitol building houses the Congress of the United States, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Starting Locally

What are some of the governing bodies in your area? Do you live in a city that is governed by a mayor and city council or other representative group? What is the seat of the county, parish, or borough where you live? Is your county seat centrally located in the country? Is it the largest city or town in the county? Identify any interesting characteristics of your county seat - physical characteristics, cultural landmarks, etc.

U.S. State Capitals

For older students you may want to introduce the geographic terms **site** and **situation**. **Site** refers to internal attributes such as the location and physical setting of a city. **Situation** refers to the external attributes of a city; its relative location to other places in the region.

Using a political map of the United States, have students locate the capital cities of the 50 states. Divide students into groups to cover all fifty states.

As students identify location they should note the locational and physical characteristics of each state capital.

1. What is its relative location within the state? (Central or close to a border?)
2. Is it located near another state capital?
3. Is it located on a major body of water? (Bay, gulf, or lake?)
4. Is it located on a river or near the mouth of the river?
5. Are there any other significant physical characteristics near the city?

Next analyze the population of the state capitals.

1. Is the state capital the largest city in the state?
2. Is the capital located near another major city in the state?
3. Is it a part of a larger metropolitan area?

Lastly, analyze the cultural attributes of the city

1. What museums are located in the city?
2. Is a major university located in the city?
3. What landmarks are associated with the city?

Students may want to create a chart to organize their information. One extension that incorporates math skills would be to analyze the information collected and compute some summary information. For example:

1. What percent of the state capitals are located close to the border?
2. What percent are located close to the state border?
3. How many and what percent are located on a large body of water?
4. What percent are located on a major river?
5. How many state capitals are the largest in population in their respective states?

Washington, DC

The United States national capital is home to so many important buildings, monuments, and museums. Several of these can be explored through the National Park Service website <http://www.nps.gov/nacc/>. Links to specific monuments and memorials are available from this site.

Washington, DC is a planned capital. Some students may be interested in how and why the site was selected. Some may want to learn about the city's architect, Pierre L'Enfant. Much information can be found at the Explore DC website, <http://www.exploredc.org/>.

An activity students may enjoy is to write research/trivia questions about Washington, DC. After compiling their questions, they can exchange them to challenge one another. They could also create a "scavenger hunt" of monuments, memorials, and landmarks in the Washington, DC area.

World Capital Cities

National capitals are more than seats of government. Most capital cities are reflections of the national culture. Their architecture, museums, shrines, and monuments can instill a sense of awe and proclaim to visitors something of the country's past as well as its future aspirations. Most people recognize the better-known examples of such cities - London, Paris, Beijing, Tokyo, or Cairo.

Choose a region of the world, perhaps a continent or portion of a continent, and analyze the locations of the capital cities of the countries in that region.

Location

1. What is its relative location within the country? (Central or close to a border?)
2. Is it located near another national capital?
3. Is it located on a major body of water? (Bay, gulf, or lake?)
4. Is it located on a river or near the mouth of the river?
5. Are there any other significant physical characteristics near the city?

Population

1. Is the state capital the largest city in the country?
2. Is the capital located near another major city in the country?
3. Is it a part of a larger metropolitan area?

Culture

1. What are some historic monuments located in the capital?
2. What museums are located in the city?
3. What landmarks are associated with the city?

Multiple Capitals

Make a list of the countries that have more than one capital city. Note the function of each capital city. Students may want to research why the country has two capital cities. See *web resources* for sources of information.

Forward Capitals

The location of a capital city can sometimes be used to make a statement by a country. One example is Pakistan. Karachi, located on the coast, served as the capital of the British colony. In 1959 the capital was moved inland to Rawalpindi, and in 1967 to Islamabad. Both cities are located much farther north, close to the contested region of Jammu and Kashmir. Both Pakistan and India claim this region, and each has a military presence in the region. The placement of the capital so close to Jammu and Kashmir signals Pakistan's intention to maintain its claim.

Moved Capitals

Countries have decided to move their national capital for other reasons. Students can research some notable examples. Have them identify the former capital and the new capital, the date the capital moved, and the reason for moving the capital city.

Brasilia, Brazil

Canberra, Australia

Astana, Kazakhstan

Abuja, Nigeria

Belmopan, Belize

Moscow/St. Petersburg/Moscow, Russia

Movement in Capital Cities

Many capital cities have developed transportation systems, particularly subway systems, which move thousands of people every hour. Students may want to explore these transportation networks. Use the Internet to identify and examine maps of subway systems. For example, London's Underground website, <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tube/>, has information and maps of the subway system. A *Google* search of other cities will yield similar sites. One such site is Subway Navigator, www.subwaynavigator.com/.

Famous Capital Cities

Have students find out about a capital city's historical and cultural features. A multimedia presentation can be produced highlighting important buildings, shrines,

monuments, and landmarks that identify the city and country. There are many cities that could be researched; feel free to add to this list of famous capital cities: Washington, DC; London, United Kingdom; Paris, France; Madrid, Spain; Berlin, Germany; Moscow, Russia; Rome, Italy; Athens, Greece; Mexico City, Mexico; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Beijing, China; Cairo, Egypt; Tokyo, Japan; Bangkok, Thailand.

III. Geo-Questions

State and world capitals are the focus of this month's questions.

1. Which U.S. state capital is located near a salt lake?
2. Which city - Boston, New York, or Philadelphia - has never served as a capital city of the United States?
3. Which U.S. state capitals lie on the banks of the Mississippi River?
4. Which U.S. state capital has the highest elevation - Denver, CO; Santa Fe, NM; or Cheyenne, WY?
5. Which two capital cities in South American are located on the Rio de la Plata?
6. Four capital cities of Europe lie on the banks of the Danube River. Name the cities and their countries.
7. The Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square are found in which Asian capital city?
8. Lagos served as the capital city of the most populous country in Africa. In 1976 the capital was relocated inland to what city?
9. Westminster and The City are two of many areas that make up this European capital city. Name the capital and the country.
10. The Potala Palace, the former residence of the Dalai Lama, is located in the capital of occupied Tibet, or Xizang, China. Name this city.

Answers

I. Map Scraps

Map 8-1

1. Kamchatka Peninsula
2. Russia
3. Sea of Okhotsk
4. Japan
5. the Ring of Fire

Map 8-2

1. Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand
2. Rangoon, Myanmar and Bangkok, Thailand
3. Irrawaddy River
4. Bay of Bengal
5. China

III. Geo-Questions

1. Salt Lake City, Utah
2. Boston
3. St. Paul, Minnesota; Baton Rouge, Louisiana
4. Santa Fe, New Mexico; 6,996 feet
5. Montevideo, Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina
6. Vienna, Austria; Bratislava, Czech Republic; Budapest, Hungary; Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro
7. Beijing, China
8. Abuja, Nigeria
9. London, United Kingdom
10. Lhasa