



Grade 4 Social Studies - Unit 2 - Good Morning, U.S.A.!: Understanding Regions

Unit Focus

In this unit, Grade 4 students explore the five regions of the United States—the Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest, and West—through hands-on, inquiry-based activities. They will investigate each region’s geography, climate, history, culture, natural resources, major landmarks, and key destinations, while learning to navigate nonfiction texts, analyze maps, and interpret diagrams and visuals. Students will also examine historical events, regional traditions, the contributions of First Peoples and other groups, and consider how humans interact with and adapt to their environment.

Students will apply their learning by conducting research on an assigned region and synthesizing information through a variety of media. The unit culminates in a group performance-based assessment, where students create and present a multimedia “Regional News Show” to showcase the unique characteristics, challenges, and interconnections of their region. This project-based approach promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication while helping students understand the rich diversity and interdependence of U.S. regions.

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

| Standard(s) | Transfer | |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| <p>Common Core English Language Arts: 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5) Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7) Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.8) Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text"). (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9.B) Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion. (CCSS.ELALITERACY.SL.4.1.A) <p>Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Standards (2023)</p> | <p><i>Students will be able to independently use their learning to...</i></p> <p>T1 Apply geographic knowledge while engaging in an iterative process of researching, creating, and refining a product so that it effectively communicates meaning to a specific audience for a clear and purposeful goal.</p> <p>T2 Apply geographic reasoning of earth’s physical and human features to better understand problems, predict outcomes, and/or develop solutions.</p> | |
| | Meaning | |
| | Understanding(s) | Essential Question(s) |
| <p><i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <p>U1 The United States is composed of diverse regions, each with unique environmental, cultural, and economic features.</p> <p>U2 Geography, including natural resources and environmental features, influences how and where people live, work, and travel.</p> <p>U3 Human activity impacts the environment, and people respond to environmental changes in various ways, including migration, settlement patterns, and economic decisions.</p> <p>U4 Maps and other visual tools help us interpret and explain geographic and cultural features across time.</p> | <p><i>Students will keep considering...</i></p> <p>Q1 How does geography shape a region’s identity?</p> <p>Q2 Why do people settle where they do?</p> <p>Q3 How do people adapt to and prepare for environmental challenges in their region?</p> <p>Q4 How do natural and human-made events impact where and how people live?</p> <p>Q5 What makes each region of the U.S. unique and worth learning about?</p> | |

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

Grade 4 - United States Geography

- Demonstrate spatial awareness by creating maps to illustrate regions within or extending beyond the political boundaries of the United States (e.g., Grand Canyon, Great Lakes, Standing Rock Indian Reservation, Pacific Northwest). (4.Geo.1.a)
- Explain the relationship between natural resources and human settlement in United States regions using maps, photographs, and other representations (e.g., Great Lakes, Connecticut River Valley, Mississippi River Delta, Pacific Northwest). (4.Geo.2.a)
- Use historical maps and other visual representations to explain how environmental characteristics of a United States region change over time (e.g., population centers, built environment, dams, national parks, ports, military bases). (4.Geo.2.b)
- Use state and regional maps to describe cultural and environmental characteristics of regions (e.g., state capitals, heritage sites, national monuments). (4.Geo.3.a)
- Analyze how catastrophic environmental and economic events have caused migration within and across various regions of the United States (e.g., hurricanes, land erosion, wildfire, unemployment, famine). (4.Geo.9.a)
- Explain how and why environmental characteristics vary across regions in the United States and North America (e.g., coastal zone, forest, grassland, tundra, desert). (4.Geo.10.a)
- Explain how individuals and groups prepare for and respond to natural and human-made disasters (e.g., levees, building codes, erosion and settlement control, wildlife crossings). (4.Geo.12.a)
- Explain how individuals and groups adapt to climate change based on the unique characteristics of their region (e.g., longer growing seasons, water storage, conservation, Federal Emergency Management Agency). (4.Geo.12.b)

Madison Public Schools Profile of a Graduate

- Product Creation: Effectively use a medium to communicate important information. (POG.3.2)

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge

Students will know...

- K1** The locations of U.S. regions, including states, capitals, major cities, highways, and physical features such as rivers, lakes, and mountains.
- K2** How maps, diagrams, and visuals provide information about geography, history, and culture.
- K3** The difference between weather and climate, typical climate patterns in each region, and how landforms influence weather.
- K4** Examples of regional events, traditions, and historical or modern contributions.
- K5** The purpose and function of nonfiction text features such as the table of contents, glossary, index, captions, and headings.
- K6** Key historical events and the contributions of the First Peoples and other groups that shaped each region.
- K7** The significance of important destinations and landmarks in U.S. regions, including cultural, historical, and natural sites
- K8** The natural resources and common foods of each region and how resources influence local economies and diets
- K9** That U.S. regions are diverse but interdependent, with geography, climate, history, and resources shaping the ways people live.

Skill(s)

Students will be skilled at...

- S1** Locating and labeling U.S. regions, states, capitals, major cities, highways, and physical features on maps.
- S2** Interpreting and analyzing maps, diagrams, charts, and visuals to extract information about geography, history, and culture.
- S3** Explaining and comparing the differences between weather and climate, and describe how landforms influence climate patterns in regions.
- S4** Identifying and describing examples of regional events, traditions, and contributions from both history and modern life.
- S5** Using nonfiction text features (table of contents, index, glossary, captions, headings) to locate, organize, and synthesize information.
- S6** Explaining the historical contributions of First Peoples and other groups in shaping each region.
- S7** Researching, describing, and explaining the historical, cultural, or natural significance of destinations and landmarks in U.S. regions.
- S8** Analyzing and comparing the natural resources and common foods of regions to explain how resources shape economies and daily life.
- S9** Comparing and contrasting U.S. regions to explain their diversity and interdependence in terms of geography, climate, history, and resources.
- S10** Synthesizing, organizing, and communicating understanding of regional studies through visuals, oral presentations, and multimedia projects.