My Own State

Using knowledge of map-making with an emphasis on scale, students create a map of a fictitious country with five states.

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Grade Level: 4-5
Duration: 1-3 class periods

National Geography Standards

Element Two: Places and Regions
5. That people create regions to interpret Earth’s complexity.

Arizona Geography Strand 4
CONCEPT 1 World in Spatial Terms
GRADE 4
PO 2 Interpret political and physical maps using the following map elements: Title, compass rose, symbols, legend, scale, road map index and grid (latitude and longitude)
GRADE 5
PO 6 Construct maps, charts and graphs to display geographic information.

Arizona Math Standard

STRAND 1 Number Sense and Operations
CONCEPT 3: Estimation.
GRADE 4
PO1. Solve grade level appropriate problems using estimation. With particular emphasis on map scale proportion in measurement
GRADE 5
PO1. Solve grade level appropriate problems using estimation. With particular emphasis on map scale proportion in measurement.

Overview
The formation of political boundaries is important to our understanding of how the world and its groups interact. The students will learn how geographical landforms separate political entities. This will also be a lesson in cooperative decision-making.

Purpose
The students will cooperatively create a map of a new country consisting of 5 states with common boundaries. The map will feature political boundaries, a compass rose, labels, and a mileage scale.

Materials
• Colored pencils or crayons in the following recommended colors:
  o blue
  o brown
  o green
  o black
• Large sheets of cardboard such as posterboard or tagboard, one (22in. x 28in.) for each group of five students OR large white construction paper (12in. x 18in.).
• Chart paper for recording brainstormed ideas
• Tools for measuring such as rulers, yardsticks, meter sticks, and tape measures
• Arizona’s Topography and Rivers map
• Arizona’s Landforms and Rivers map
• Group Performance Assessment Rubric
• Individual Assessment Worksheet and Answer Key

Objectives
The student will be able to:
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1. Explain why boundaries are important.

2. How landforms and people contribute to the creation of boundaries.

3. Use estimation to determine distances on a map using a mileage scale.

4. Make a map including a mileage scale.

Procedures

*Prerequisite Geography Skills: basic map reading skills and knowledge of landforms*

*Prerequisite Math Skills: basic measuring skills and knowledge of ratio*

SESSION ONE

1. Have students examine the Arizona’s Topography and Rivers map and Arizona’s Landforms and Rivers map. As a whole class, brainstorm common features on both maps and write the responses on chart paper.

2. Brainstorm reasons for creating boundaries, with specific emphasis on the Colorado River border with California and Nevada, as well as the Four Corners shared by Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico.

3. Tell students that they are going to make a map of a new country that will incorporate the brainstormed map elements while also keeping in mind the reasons borders are necessary. Explain that each student will make his/her state on the same poster or paper as that of four other students. These 5 states will equal a new country.

4. There will need to be a border around the edge of the poster board for labels, keys, etc. The students may pencil this in before they add color.

5. The students will determine where they want to draw the boundaries of their country. As a group they must decide where and why the boundaries are to be drawn on their collective map. Students’ discussions should also incorporate their personal ideas and feelings for where their boundaries should lie – paralleling political, religious, and cultural beliefs used for drawing boundaries in the real world.

6. Discuss possible restrictions for drawing their state boundaries. For example, the students may notice that a blue line (river) makes a natural boundary such as the Rio Grande and the Colorado. Brown may be a desert or mountains.

7. Students decide which color(s) they will use for their map section and begin coloring boundary lines for their states. Remind them that their five states together will constitute a new country.

8. Once boundaries are decided upon and drawn with a dark marker for each state, the students must decide how large their country is in relation to the world. Possible student prediction: Country A is one-twelfth of the earth’s surface in area. Country A is 600 miles from east to west and 1000 miles from north to south. Now have one student look in the atlas to determine the actual area and circumference of the earth. (Area = 197, 000,000 square miles and Circumference = approximately 25,000 miles.) The students can then multiply their estimated dimensions and get the area of their country (Country A equals 600,000 square miles).

9. Now they can determine the relative size of their country by comparing their area to the earth’s real size.
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10. The students work as a group to create a scale for the mileage on their country map using both metric and U.S. customary measures. Major landforms and water bodies should be clearly labeled.

11. The students should also include names for each state as well as the country. The students should include a key for features not already labeled on their map. The map should have a title.

12. Before the formal assessment, assemble as a whole group to discuss students’ rationales for drawing their boundaries as well as how they arrived at their map mileage scale.

Assessment

The students will answer questions on the Individual Assessment Worksheet. Questions 1-4 measure geography knowledge. Questions 5-6 measure math knowledge. A score of 80% or higher is considered mastery.

The students will also be assessed for their geography skills using the My Own State Group Performance Assessment Rubric on their map. Mastery is considered 19 points or higher.

Extensions

Latitude and longitude lines or other grid lines may be incorporated into the students’ maps.

Students may use Tempera paint thinned to a 2:1 ratio with water to create their maps rather than colored pencils/crayons. This paint could be blown threw straws to create landforms, boundaries, etc. Using this method will take at least two days for the paint to dry before any labeling is done.

After the maps are completed the students could design mottoes, flags, seals, etc., for their state.

They could also create brochures, reports, and websites, describing in detail aspects of their state.

Cultural diversity could be addressed as well as political structure, foreign relations, and legal structure.

The maps could be revisited throughout the Social Studies curriculum to focus students’ work on the current concept being studied. (For example: “Would any of your states fight for secession in the Civil War?”)