African Regions and their Folk Tales
Students research the regions of Africa through folk tales.

Author: Cheryl Wiens
Grade Level: 6-8
Duration: 3-4 class period

National Geography Standards
ELEMENT THREE: PHYSICAL SYSTEMS
8. The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on earth's Surface.

ELEMENT FIVE: ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY
14. How human actions modify the physical environment.

Arizona Social Studies Standard
Grade 6
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms
PO 1 Construct maps, charts, and graphs to display geographic information.

Grade 7
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms
PO 1 Identify regions studied in Strand 2 using a variety of criteria, (e.g., climate, landforms, culture, vegetation).

Grade 8
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 1 The World in Spatial Terms
PO 1 Construct maps, charts, and graphs to display geographic information.
PO 4 Locate physical and cultural features (e.g., continents, cities, countries, significant waterways, mountain ranges, climate zones, major water bodies, landforms) throughout the world.

Arizona Language Arts Standards
READING STANDARD:
Grades 6, 7, and 8
Strand 2 Comprehending Literary Text
Concept 1 Elements of Literature
PO 5 Analyze the influence of setting (e.g., time of day or year, historical period, place, situation) on the problem and resolution

Concept 2 Historical and Cultural Aspect of Literature
PO 1 Describe the historical and cultural aspects found in cross-cultural works of literature.

WRITING STANDARD:
Grades 6, 7, and 8
Strand 1 Writing Process
Concept 1 Prewriting
PO 5 Use organizational strategies (e.g., outline, chart, table, graph, Venn Diagram, web, story map, plot pyramid) to plan writing.

Concept 2 Writing Components
PO 1 Use accurate, specific, powerful words that effectively convey the intended message.

Concept 6 Research
PO 1 Record information (e.g., observations, notes, lists, charts, map labels and legends) related to the topic.
PO 2 Write a summary of information from sources (e.g. encyclopedias, websites, experts) that includes: paraphrasing to convey ideas and details from the source main idea(s) and relevant details.
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Overview

The geographical concept of regions and how and why they change is one that middle school students often find difficult to understand. The second largest continent, Africa, has several regions, each with distinct natural and human characteristics.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will use research skills to compare the characteristics of three major natural regions of Africa: the desert, the rain forest, and the savanna. Students will also establish how the people who live there have affected these regions. Then students will listen to African folk tales from the three regions and describe the setting of each story.

Materials

- Handouts 1, 2, and 3: Note Taking Sheets on the three regions
- Handout 4: Comparison Chart (extension activity)
- Handout 5: Writing Prompt
- Map of African Regions (with or without names)
- Teacher copy of Talk Talk: An Ashanti Legend
- Teacher copy of Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain
- Teacher copy of The Storytellers (out of print, but a great book if you can find it)
- Various classroom resources for research (i.e., almanacs, encyclopedia, nonfiction books about Africa's regions, Internet)

Objectives

The student will be able to:
- explain the concept of region.
- identify the three major regions of Africa and relate their human and physical characteristics.
- choose an appropriate source to use for research.
- take notes that summarize and paraphrase.
- incorporate notes into a paragraph.
- analyze African folk tales by describing the settings and the relationship to the reading selection

Procedures

1. As a class, discuss and brainstorm about what students already know about the African regions and locate the African regions on the map.
2. Assign students to one of the three regions: desert, savanna, or rain forest. Within each group, assign individual research duties. Give each student a copy of the note taking sheets for his or her assigned region.
3. Students research their question, continuing research for a day or two. Within groups, students should share their research results by passing around a master copy of the note taking handout for their region.
4. For homework, students should write a paragraph summarizing the research findings.
5. Read aloud the three African tales: Talk Talk: An Ashanti Legend, of Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain, and The Storytellers. Based on clues in each tale, students will determine in which region the story is set. Lead the class in a discussion of the setting of each story and how it relates to the story.

Assessment

Paragraphs will be evaluated for the traits of ideas and word choice using the Six Trait Writing Rubric. Mastery will be considered 4 or higher.

Extensions

Distribute Handout 4, a comparison chart. Lead the class in a discussion of the various distinct elements of each of the three regions.
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Groups could meet and share individual summaries, and then combine them into reports on their region.

Students write their own versions of African tales, distinctive to the region they researched.

Sources


_Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain_ by Verna Aardema, Puffin Books, 1981. ISBN 0140546162


www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld

http://members.nbci.com/_XMCM/pmartin/liberia/text_folktales_spider.htm

http://www.enchantedlearning.com/biomes

http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org

http://www.awf.org/animals.wlg001

For further reading of African folk tales:


_Folk Tales and Fables of the Middle East and Africa_ by Robert Ingpen & Barbara Hayes, Chelsea House, 1994.
