Make a Claim! Are These Regions the Same?

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Essential Question

Summary

In this lesson, students learn to compare and contrast geographical features found among different regions in the United States. Students will then apply these skills by comparing their home state's features with those of another state in the nation.

Snapshot

Engage

Students use the “I Notice” part of the “I Notice, I Wonder” strategy to compare and contrast pictures of the West and Southwest regions of the United States.

Explore

Students share and add to their observations by participating in a “Commit and Toss” activity. They then generate and record questions in a follow-up “I Wonder” activity about the differences observed in each picture set. A class chart is created from the discussion, with three to four key observations and questions recorded.

Explain

The picture book *Mirror* by Jeannie Baker is shown to the students. As the book’s pages are displayed, the discussion focus is on students recognizing and discussing the differences and similarities between the Moroccan and Australian cultures and geographical features.

Extend

Students choose a state to compare and contrast with their home state. Students research both states and then showcase features and characteristics of the two states, emphasizing similarities and differences.

Evaluate

Students complete a Venn diagram to demonstrate that they can identify, describe, and compare major physical features of the two original regions, the West and Southwest regions of the U.S.

Materials

- *Mirror* by Jeannie Baker (physical copy or read-along video, linked below)
- Southwest and West Photo Sets (attached)
- I Notice, I Wonder graphic organizer (attached; one per student)
- Venn Diagram (attached; one per student)
- World map
- Notebook paper
- White copy paper, colors, glue, scissors, sticky notes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Before the lesson, print out the attached **Southwest and West Photo Sets** and display the pictures around the room in sets of two. Each set should consist of a picture from the West region and one from the Southwest region of the United States.

Additionally, prepare for each student a sheet of notebook paper that has a number from 1–10 at the top. This number will determine the picture set with which students will start their second activity.

Introduce students to the I Notice, I Wonder strategy. Pass out a copy of the attached **I Notice, I Wonder** handout to each student. Invite students to use this strategy to compare and contrast pictures of the West and Southwest regions of the United States. Pair students up and have pairs look at each set of pictures displayed around the room. Students should record observations in the "I Notice" column of their handouts. Ask students to pay particular attention to landforms, color, type of plants, soil, sky, etc. Students should be thinking about and observing things that are the same or different in the areas depicted in the pictures.

Teacher's Note: Making Observations

If your students have had little experience with making observations, you might need to pull up a practice picture set and work as a class to make observations before you start this activity. Be sure students do not lapse into making inferences—just observations!

Optional: Technology Use

This activity also could be done using a PowerPoint presentation to display the pictures while students record their observations in a Google notebook.

30 minutes

Explore

After students have returned to their seats, give each student a sheet of notebook paper that has a number from 1–10 at the top. This number determines the picture set with which students will start the next activity. Have each student observe the picture set that corresponds to the number on their paper.

On their notebook papers, have students write one thing that was the same in both pictures and one thing that was different. Remind students to put their names on their note sheets.

Next, introduce students to the Commit and Toss strategy. Ask students to crumple the paper into a "snowball." Students should toss their snowballs into a community pile. Each student should then pick up another student's snowball to read. Students should look at the number at the top of the paper they chose and compare the observations recorded from this student's perspective to their own observations for that set of pictures. Students should also revisit their I Notice, I Wonder handout and to add one similarity and one difference about that particular picture set in the "I Notice" column. Have students then throw their snowballs again.

Follow this procedure three to four times. After the last time, each should return their snowball paper to its original owner.

Introduce students to the CUS and Discuss strategy. Using this strategy, have students *circle* things on the paper they have questions about, *underline* things they disagree with, and *star* things they agree with.

Next, give students time to discuss with tablemates what they discovered during the CUS and Discuss activity. Have them add anything new that they agree with to their original "I Notice" sheet.

Next, invite students focus on the "I Wonder" column of their handout. This activity should be done individually, but with some collaboration and influence between students—have students go around the room again and look at the pictures again. This time, they should record one question about the differences observed between the two pictures in each set. They should do this for each set of pictures. This should be a quick Gallery Walk-style activity. Encourage small group discussions at each picture.

Teacher's Note: Creating Questions from Observations

If your class needs more scaffolding, go back to the practice set of pictures you used to model the "I Notice" and do the same with brainstorming questions for the "I Wonder" portion of the activity.

Have a class discussion as students help you create a class chart, with three to four key observations and questions.

120 minutes

Explain

Introduce to your students the premise of the wordless picture book *Mirror* by Jeannie Baker. Explain that this book takes place in two different settings: Morocco and Australia. Using a map, show students the continents of Africa and Australia, and specifically locate the country of Morocco and the city of Sydney. Explain that Africa, the second-largest continent, and Australia, the smallest, both have great cultural and geographical history across their regions.

This lesson's vocabulary words could include c*limate, vegetation, landscape, landforms, fishing, farming, natural resources, tourism, global trade, manufacturing, culture,* and any others that you or your students would like to focus on.

To help students understand the vocabulary words, introduce the words as you look at the maps. Then, read through *Mirrors* with the class using a physical copy of the book (if possible) or by utilizing using a video readthrough such as the following: "Mirror." An alternate video that displays the book's pages and reads aloud the introduction is linked here: "Mirror by Jeannie Baker."

The goal of this activity is for students to recognize features such as vegetation, landform, landmarks, climate, and natural resources, and to begin comparing and contrasting between the two regions depicted in the book. As the book is shown to students, the discussion should be focused on students recognizing and discussing the differences and similarities between the Moroccan and Australian cultures and geographical features.

Sample Questions for Students

- What similarities and differences are initially apparent between the two settings?
- What sorts of landscapes are seen in the pictures?
- What tells you that the climate in both areas is arid or semi-arid?
- How do the people in both areas get around? What are their modes of transportation? Why are they different?
- What kinds of natural resources are evident in the pictures?
- Do you recognize any features similar to what we saw in the pictures of the Southwest or West regions of the United States?
- In which setting is there predominantly a culture of consumption? How can you tell?
- In which setting are there limited resources? How can you tell?
- Which culture uses more mass-manufactured products? Which uses more locally made items? What is the evidence for your statement?
- Identify some practices that show how the two boys are alike. How are they different?
- How does the rug connect the two storylines?

Optional: Google Earth Activity

If you or your students are inclined to do so, you can have them use Google Earth to locate Morocco (the Valley of the Roses) and Sydney, Australia. Can students identify any landmarks using Google Earth? Can they plot sites on the map following the journey the rug took as it was made and brought to the boy in Australia?

Have students think back to the "I Notice, I Wonder" chart they created in the first activity. Ask them if they can recognize differences in two regions of the United States, and how.

Using the same partners from the “I Notice, I Wonder” activity, invite students to create a five-page book inspired by *Mirror* comparing the Southwest and West regions. Allow students to have a choice in how they would like to write and draw their book. They may want to base it on two children, or animals, or they can use the geographical features themselves as their focal points.

Lastly, invite volunteers to present their books to the class or to small groups.

Optional: Follow-Ups

In this particular lesson, the picture book *Mirror* is used to emphasize differences in geographical and topical features. The book is also rich with cultural elements, which might lead to a follow-up lesson or a rich conversation at another time.

120 minutes

Extend

As a class, read and look through photos and facts from a list of states on the National Geographic Kids website linked here, or use another website of your choosing. Have students compare the information with what they know about their home states. Refer back to the vocabulary introduced in the Explain section of the lesson.

Have students choose a state to compare and contrast with their home state. Students should gather data to showcase the features and characteristics of the two states, emphasizing similarities and differences by using evidence in the form of pictures, articles, and their own writing, which should be factually based on their research. Remind students that this is not about what is good or bad, since those are opinions—their projects should be based on actual findings about the states' characteristics.

Students can showcase their results in a variety of ways: PowerPoint presentations, Padlet, posters, brochures, advertisements, or booklets about the two states.

Optional: Trade Market Activity

Another way to extend the lesson is called "Trade Market." Students can create items (bracelets, necklaces, drawings, etc.) that are representative of two different regions of the United States. They then trade with classmates or set up a market for other students to come purchase items made by the students. Students set up items for sale, and they are given play money and allowed to purchase items from other students' trade shops. This incorporates math standards as well as social skills.

40 minutes

Evaluate

Pass out a copy of the attached **Venn Diagram** to each student. Have students complete the Venn diagram to demonstrate understanding by comparing and contrasting the two original regions, the West and the Southwest. Ask students to find additional similarities and differences in the regions to add to what was originally discussed. You can specify the number of additional items and also provide students with websites to aid in their research.

Resources

- Baker, J. (Writer), & MissEmsBookworm Read Aloud (Adapter). (2018, January 27). Mirror by Jeannie Baker [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3cKvtePhlo
- Baker, J. (Writer), Wojda, C. (Producer), & Sanders, A. (Adapter). (2013, November 1). Mirror [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SjZWAfG8o4
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Commit and toss. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/119
- K20 Center. (n.d.). CUS and discuss. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/162
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk/carousel. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I notice, I wonder. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/180
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Venn diagram. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/2918
- National Geographic Partners. (n.d.). *U.S. States.* National Geographic Kids. https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/states/
- Smith, J. -M. (2016, January 5). *Country map on brown wooden surface*. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/gtCWBwbZNpM