

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

Comparing Political Borders

Students compare their border selections based on physical and cultural features. They discuss other factors that could impact where borders are established.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

OVERVIEW

Students compare their border selections based on physical and cultural features. They discuss other factors that could impact where borders are established.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/comparing-political-borders/>

DIRECTIONS

1. Have small groups present and compare borders.

Remind students that, for the maps they created in Lesson 1, Activity 1, they were asked to draw borders as they saw fit. There are no right or wrong answers. Have students separate into the same small groups from Lesson 1, Activity 1 of this unit and select a spokesperson. Have each spokesperson present their group's map, along with the reasons for creating borders where they did, including why each group, religion, or physical region was placed there, to the class. List the reasons on the board as students share them. If needed, use the following prompts:

- *How many countries do you have? Why?*

- *What did you mostly base your borders on? How did you decide to create your borders?*
- *What made drawing the borders challenging?*
- *How did the physical features factor into your decision? How might the physical features affect the development of your countries?* (Possible response: Mountains and rivers are a key factor because if countries had to split a physical feature between them, each country would try to gain the part that is most valuable, such as freshwater.)
- *How did the cultural features factor into your decision? How might the cultural features affect the development of your countries?* (Possible response: Language is a key factor because citizens that speak a certain language within a country will be better able to communicate. If a country has a mix of different cultural characteristics, those characteristics could spread from one culture to another, creating a new culture.)

2. Discuss factors that impact borders.

As a class, discuss the reasons listed on the board for why borders were placed in different areas. Ask: *What factors were most important? What factors were least important? What information did you think was missing, or would have been helpful to know in order to avoid conflict when creating borders?* Ask students to comment about whether they agree or disagree with reasons other students gave. Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers; students should discuss their ideas and impressions.

3. Brainstorm other factors that shape country borders.

Ask students to brainstorm what else might shape country borders, in addition to the physical and cultural features they examined during this activity. Add students' ideas to the list on the board as they volunteer them. Elicit ideas such as wars between countries, natural resources, or dividing land evenly between different groups.

4. Have students record ideas to refer to later in this unit.

Tell students that they will complete a unit of lessons about borders in Europe, and that their ideas about where borders should be placed will be important for their study of Europe. Have each student record the list of factors that shape country borders on a piece of paper to refer to in later lessons, to see if their ideas have changed.

Informal Assessment

Evaluate students based on their participation in the whole-class discussion.

Extending the Learning

- Ask students to think about borders in their state, community, or school. Ask: *How were the borders defined? Do they follow a physical feature in the landscape? Do they follow cultural differences between people on either side of the border?*
- Pose questions related to the size and shape of countries. Ask: *Are large countries at an advantage or a disadvantage? Have students use a globe or wall map of the world to locate really large countries. Ask: How many really large countries are there? What might be some reasons for this?*

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

- English Language Arts
 - **Geography**
 - [Human Geography](#)
 - [Physical Geography](#)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explain and compare their border selections based on physical and cultural features
- discuss other factors that could impact where borders are established

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming

- Discussions
- Reflection

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Evaluating
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Analyzing Geographic Information
 - Answering Geographic Questions
 - Asking Geographic Questions

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- Standard 4:

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 3:

People, Places, and Environments

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 1:

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

- Standard 13:

How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface

• **Standard 5:**

That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Globe or wall map of the world
- Lesson 1, Activity 1 completed worksheets
- Lined or ruled paper
- Pencils
- Pens

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Maps can be used as tools to help us understand our world. Specifically, maps can help demonstrate how borders intersect physical and human geographical features, and how those intersections can lead to cooperation and/or conflict. Borders of regions or of countries define an area, which has a particular shape and size. Sometimes physical features define the border of a region or a country. For example, coastlines are borders between the regions of land and water, and mountains may serve as borders between different countries or different cultural groups. Country borders, however determined, define a physical space over which a country exercises control. When a political border is imposed on the physical landscape, it defines the area, shape, and size of the country, as well as the physical features and natural resources

available. These factors of shape and size can influence the ways in which human activity is structured; for example, land use, transportation, and settlement patterns. Sometimes the shape and size suggest that a country may want to expand its borders in order to increase its size, change its shape, and/or control more resources.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
border	<i>noun</i>	natural or artificial line separating two pieces of land.
continent	<i>noun</i>	one of the seven main land masses on Earth.
country	<i>noun</i>	geographic territory with a distinct name, flag, population, boundaries, and government.
language	<i>noun</i>	set of sounds, gestures, or symbols that allows people to communicate.
map	<i>noun</i>	symbolic representation of selected characteristics of a place, usually drawn on a flat surface.
mountain	<i>noun</i>	landmass that forms as tectonic plates interact with each other.
natural resource	<i>noun</i>	a material that humans take from the natural environment to survive, to satisfy their needs, or to trade with others.
physical features	<i>noun</i>	naturally occurring geographic characteristics.
political boundary	<i>noun</i>	imaginary line separating one political unit, such as a country or state, from another.
region	<i>noun</i>	any area on Earth with one or more common characteristics. Regions are the basic units of geography.
religion	<i>noun</i>	a system of spiritual or supernatural belief.
resource	<i>noun</i>	available supply of materials, goods, or services. Resources can be natural or human.
river	<i>noun</i>	large stream of flowing fresh water.

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

- [National Geographic Education: Europe—Resources](#)
- [National Geographic Education: Europe—Physical Geography](#)
- [National Geographic Education: Europe—Human Geography](#)

Maps

- [NG MapMaker Interactive: Europe](#)
- [NG MapMaker 1-Page Map: Europe](#)
- [Europe MapMaker Kit](#)

Websites

- [National Geographic Education: National Teacher Leadership Academy \(NTLA\)](#)

