

**RESOURCE LIBRARY**  
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

## Influence of Shape and Size

Students examine the shape of a selected country in Europe, and analyze the influence that shape may have on the human activities within the country.

**GRADES**

6 - 8

**SUBJECTS**

*Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography*

**CONTENTS**

2 Links

## OVERVIEW

Students examine the shape of a selected country in Europe, and analyze the influence that shape may have on the human activities within the country.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/influence-of-shape-and-size/>

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Introduce the activity and assign countries.

Tell students they will examine the shape of a country in Europe with coastal borders and analyze the influence that shape may have on the human activities within the country. Divide students into five small groups, and assign each group a country in Europe from the following list:

- Bulgaria

- Estonia
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain

## 2. Have groups use mapping tools to explore countries.

Have each small group use the MapMaker Interactive to explore the physical features of their assigned country, and the MapMaker 1-Page Map tool to explore the political geography.

## 3. Have groups draw and label borders, physical features, and cities in their countries.

Ask groups to sketch the general shape of their assigned country on a blank sheet of paper and work together to do the following:

- identify the borders that are on a coast
- identify the borders that are on land
- note physical features, if any, that define the land borders
- identify any countries that share a border with the assigned country
- locate the capital and other major cities

## 4. Have students discuss the following questions within groups and as a whole class.

Write the questions below on the board for students to refer to during their discussions. Encourage them to make any notes on their maps and to be prepared to share their ideas with the whole class.

- *How would you describe the country's shape?*
- *How much of the border is coastal? How much is land?*
- *How many countries border yours?*
- *Where is the capital city located relative to the shape?*
- *Where are other major cities located relative to the shape?*
- *What problems or advantages might these locations offer given the shape of the country?*

- *How might the shape influence such human activities as transportation, government, defense, regional identities within the country, and similar activities?*

Discuss each question as a class. Give each small group an opportunity to share their ideas as you move through the list of questions.

#### **5. Make a connection to what students will do in Lesson 2, Activity 2 of this unit.**

Restate the guiding question: How does the shape of a country influence the human activities within the country? Remind students that these factors of shape and size define a physical space over which a country exercises control and can influence the ways in which human activity is structured. Tell students that, in Lesson 2, Activities 2 and 3 of this unit, they will explore what they know about these factors at a larger scale: in the continent of Europe and its physical and cultural landscape.

## Modification

For Step 2: If you do not have a computer for each small group, project the mapping tools at the front of the class and have each group take turns using the computer to explore their assigned country.

## Extending the Learning

Have students use National Geographic Traveler guides to find more information about each country in Europe with coastal borders that they explored in this activity.

- Bulgaria
- Estonia
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Human Geography
- Physical Geography

# Learning Objectives

Students will:

- examine the shape of a selected country in Europe
- analyze the influence that shape may have on the human activities within the country

# Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Multimedia instruction
- Research

# Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
  - Learning and Innovation Skills
    - Communication and Collaboration
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Creating
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information

- Analyzing Geographic Information
- Organizing Geographic Information

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## 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 15:

How physical systems affect human systems

- Standard 4:

The physical and human characteristics of places

## ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS\*S)

- Standard 2:

Communication and Collaboration

### Preparation

### What You'll Need

## MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Blank paper
- Pencils
- Pens

## REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required

- Tech Setup: 1 computer per small group, Projector

## PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

## GROUPING

- Large-group instruction
- Small-group instruction

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

# Background Information

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.

Europe's shape allows for a mingling of land and sea, which has moderated the climate and provided access to other world areas. No place is over 483 kilometers (300 miles) from the sea. Europe has a moderate climate, no deserts, ice-free ports, an extensive radial river system, and a shape that aids fishing. Consisting of approximately 6,437,376 kilometers (4,000,000 square miles), Europe is a relatively small area. Islands are near the mainland, and water widths are about the same. There is no endless expanse of sea, and no land area is far away.

# Prior Knowledge

# Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
border	<i>noun</i>	natural or artificial line separating two pieces of land.
capital	<i>noun</i>	city where a region's government is located.
city	<i>noun</i>	large settlement with a high population density.
climate	<i>noun</i>	all weather conditions for a given location over a period of time.
coast	<i>noun</i>	edge of land along the sea or other large body of water.
country	<i>noun</i>	geographic territory with a distinct name, flag, population, boundaries, and government.
cultural landscape	<i>noun</i>	human imprint on the physical environment.
island	<i>noun</i>	body of land surrounded by water.
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.
transportation	<i>noun</i>	movement of people or goods from one place to another.

---

### 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 \(NTLA\)](#)



© 1996–2023 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved.