

RESOURCE LIBRARY  
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

## Major Languages of the Americas

Students identify major languages spoken in the Americas, map them, and discuss the relationship between the distribution of languages and the colonial history of the countries.

### GRADES

3 - 5

### SUBJECTS

*Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, World History*

### CONTENTS

1 PDF, 1 Link

## OVERVIEW

Students identify major languages spoken in the Americas, map them, and discuss the relationship between the distribution of languages and the colonial history of the countries.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/major-languages-of-americas/>

## Program



## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Have students identify major languages spoken in the Americas.

Distribute the worksheet Major Languages of the Americas and have students work together to create appropriate symbols for each language; for example, **E** for English, **D** for Dutch, **Da**

for Danish, and **CH** for Caribbean Hindustani.

## 2. Have students map major languages spoken in the Americas.

Have students use construction paper or paper, crayons, and markers to make the symbols, cut them out, and place them on the appropriate countries on one of the large maps of the Americas from the Americas MapMaker Kit.

## 3. Have a whole-class discussion about the relationship between the distribution of modern languages and the colonial history of the Americas.

Have students look for relationships and patterns on the large map of the Americas. As a class, discuss the relationship between the distribution of modern languages and the colonial history of different countries in the Americas. Ask: *What influences, other than language, did colonial powers have on the culture of each country? What characteristics can you identify in a country's culture that shows its history was shaped by more than one colonial power?*

# Extending the Learning

Have students research the many languages spoken within their own communities and discuss the reasons why there are so many. Create a display showing how to say "hello!" in each language.

## OBJECTIVES

# Subjects & Disciplines

### Geography

- Human Geography

### Social Studies

- World History

# Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify major languages spoken in the Americas
- illustrate where different languages are spoken by placing symbols on a large map of the Americas

- discuss the relationship between the distribution of languages in the Americas and the colonial history of those countries

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

## Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Themes
  - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Analyzing Geographic Information
  - Organizing Geographic Information

## National Standards, Principles, and Practices

### NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 1:

Culture

- 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 9:**

The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface

## **Preparation**

## **What You'll Need**

### **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- Construction paper
- Crayons
- Drawing paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Transparent tape

### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

- Internet Access: Optional
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom

### **PHYSICAL SPACE**

- Classroom

### **GROUPING**

- Large-group instruction

### **OTHER NOTES**

Before starting this activity, assemble the Americas Mega Map.

## **BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY**

# Background Information

Geographers use maps to convey information to others. You can display physical, political or cultural information, or use maps to illustrate specific themes and topics. Maps are useful in helping to see patterns or relationships between layers of information.

## Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

| Term           | Part of Speech | Definition  |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| colonial power | <i>noun</i>    | country, nation, or territory that controls large or important colonies.  |
| culture        | <i>noun</i>    | learned behavior of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods. |

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### For Further Exploration

#### Articles & Profiles

- [CIA: The World Factbook—Field Listing: Languages](#)

