

RESOURCE LIBRARY  
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

## Mountains, Rivers, and Vegetation of Europe

Students review what they have learned about physical features and their importance. Then they read a brief description of major physical features in Europe, locate them on a map, and compare them to country borders.

### GRADES

6 - 8

### SUBJECTS

*English Language Arts, Geography, Physical Geography*

### CONTENTS

5 PDFs

## OVERVIEW

Students review what they have learned about physical features and their importance. Then they read a brief description of major physical features in Europe, locate them on a map, and compare them to country borders.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/mountains-rivers-and-vegetation-of-europe/>

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Review physical features and their importance.

Ask students to think back to Lesson 1 of this unit, in which they created borders based on the information given on several maps. The features on those maps included religions, mountains, rivers, and languages. Ask: *Which of the features on those maps were physical features?* (mountains, rivers) Students may understand this distinction, or they might need

some clarification about the difference between physical and cultural features. Point out that in the next three lessons of this unit, students will focus on physical features, and that cultural, or human, features will be addressed later in the unit. Ask: *How would physical features be important for defining countries? Do you think country borders should line up with physical features? Why or why not?* If students have difficulty answering, prompt them with questions about travel, communication, growing food, and other things that people in every region would need to do.

## **2. Introduce key vocabulary in the reading passage.**

Use the Background and Vocabulary tab in this activity to do some vocabulary pre-work. Read aloud terms and definitions that are critical to understanding the reading passage. Ask students to use them in complete sentences and/or to provide examples of them in order to demonstrate understanding.

## **3. Have pairs read a passage about mountains, rivers, and vegetation in Europe.**

Divide the class into pairs and give each pair a copy of the reading passage Interactions of Land and Water in Europe. Have partners read the passage, underlining or highlighting each proper name of a physical feature of Europe as they read. If students need additional support, project the worksheet and model underlining physical features in the first paragraph.

## **4. Have small groups locate features from the reading on maps and label them.**

Combine pairs to form small groups. Distribute copies of the worksheet Analyzing Interactions of Land and Water, and the maps Natural Vegetation of Europe and Physical Map of Europe, to each small group. Have groups complete Part 1 of the worksheet by locating and labeling features from the reading passage on the maps.

## **5. As a whole class, compare maps and answer questions about the reading.**

Distribute copies of the map Country Borders in Europe to each group. Work together as a whole class to complete Part 2 of the worksheet. Compare the map Country Borders in Europe to the Physical Map of Europe and Natural Vegetation of Europe maps. Then discuss the questions and have students write their answers. Finally, use the map transparencies to show the class how borders and physical features do or do not line up.

#### 6. Have small groups complete a writing assignment.

Have students return to their small groups to complete Part 3 of the worksheet. Ask each group to choose one of the three scenarios and work cooperatively to write a paragraph. Ask each group to present their writing, supporting their points with maps, as needed.

## Modification

Have students use the Cornell Note Taking method with the reading passage. [Click here](#) to find and download a blank Cornell Note Taking worksheet.

## Informal Assessment

Check for student understanding by observing discussion and presentation contributions, and by evaluating completed worksheets and writing. Students should refer to factual information in the reading and to specific geographic locations, features, and borders in their discussions and writing.

## Extending the Learning

Have students make connections to mountains, rivers, and vegetation in your local area.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

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

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- learn the locations of major rivers, mountain ranges, and vegetation of Europe
- explore how these physical features line up with country borders in Europe

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

## Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Reading
- Writing

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

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

## National Standards, Principles, and Practices

# IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- **Standard 1:**

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

- **Standard 5:**

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 1:**

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

- **Standard 3:**

How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

- **Standard 4:**

The physical and human characteristics of places

- **Standard 7:**

The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth's surface

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

- **Standard 2:**

Communication and Collaboration

### Preparation

### What You'll Need

### MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Highlighters
- Map transparencies
- Pencils

- Pens

## REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

## PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

## GROUPING

- Large-group instruction
- Small-group instruction

## OTHER NOTES

Before starting the activity, make transparencies of key maps. Print the following maps on transparency paper: Physical Map of Europe, Natural Vegetation of Europe, and Country Borders in Europe.

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

### Background Information

Climate is the most influential component of the physical environment at the global scale, as it dictates the supply of energy and water at Earth's surface. Europe's temperatures are generally milder than would be expected for its latitudinal location. Europe in general is a well-watered region, receiving adequate precipitation for humid climates; there are no deserts in Europe. Europe has a variety of major vegetation zones, including semidesert, grass steppe, shrub (wooded) steppe, tundra, boreal forest, mountain forest and Alpine meadow, Mediterranean scrubland, and Mediterranean forest, as well as mixed forest. The Alps mountain range forms part of France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania. The Alpine peaks separate European regions and are the source of many of Europe's major rivers, such as the Rhône, Rhine, Po, and many tributaries of the Danube.

Humans have had a negative impact on the zone of mixed forest that once stretched across the continent from Great Britain and Ireland to central Europe. Approximately 80 percent of Europe's land was once forested. But in the early 21st century, forests covered only about 30 percent of the continent. In southern Europe, Mediterranean vegetation is very distinctive. It includes evergreen trees, shrubs, and scrub, or stunted trees and shrubs. The wooded-steppe and grass-steppe vegetation zones are found primarily in southwestern Russia and Ukraine. Semidesert vegetation is found in the dry lowland near the northern and northwestern shores of the Caspian Sea.

## Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>agriculture</b>	<i>noun</i>	the art and science of cultivating land for growing crops (farming) or raising livestock (ranching).
<b>biome</b>	<i>noun</i>	area of the planet which can be classified according to the plant and animal life in it.
<b>border</b>	<i>noun</i>	natural or artificial line separating two pieces of land.
<b>boreal forest</b>	<i>noun</i>	land covered by evergreen trees in cool, northern latitudes. Also called taiga.
<b>climate</b>	<i>noun</i>	all weather conditions for a given location over a period of time.
<b>coast</b>	<i>noun</i>	edge of land along the sea or other large body of water.
<b>continent</b>	<i>noun</i>	one of the seven main land masses on Earth.
<b>country</b>	<i>noun</i>	geographic territory with a distinct name, flag, population, boundaries, and government.
<b>crop</b>	<i>noun</i>	agricultural produce.
<b>desert</b>	<i>noun</i>	area of land that receives no more than 25 centimeters (10 inches) of precipitation a year.
<b>fjord</b>	<i>noun</i>	long, narrow ocean inlet between steep slopes.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Definition</b>
forest	<i>noun</i>	ecosystem filled with trees and underbrush.
geography	<i>noun</i>	study of places and the relationships between people and their environments.
glacier	<i>noun</i>	mass of ice that moves slowly over land.
hydroelectric power	<i>noun</i>	usable energy generated by moving water converted to electricity.
latitude	<i>noun</i>	distance north or south of the Equator, measured in degrees.
lowland	<i>noun</i>	slow-flowing river ecosystem usually found in lower altitudes.
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.
mountain range	<i>noun</i>	series or chain of mountains that are close together.
ocean	<i>noun</i>	large body of salt water that covers most of the Earth.
peninsula	<i>noun</i>	piece of land jutting into a body of water.
physical features	<i>noun</i>	naturally occurring geographic characteristics.
plain	<i>noun</i>	flat, smooth area at a low elevation.
precipitation	<i>noun</i>	all forms in which water falls to Earth from the atmosphere.
region	<i>noun</i>	any area on Earth with one or more common characteristics. Regions are the basic units of geography.
river	<i>noun</i>	large stream of flowing fresh water.
sea level	<i>noun</i>	base level for measuring elevations. Sea level is determined by measurements taken over a 19-year cycle.
steppe	<i>noun</i>	dry, flat grassland with no trees and a cool climate.
territory	<i>noun</i>	land an animal, human, or government protects from intruders.
trade	<i>noun</i>	buying, selling, or exchanging of goods and services.
tundra	<i>noun</i>	cold, treeless region in Arctic and Antarctic climates.
vegetation	<i>noun</i>	all the plant life of a specific place.

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## For Further Exploration



## Articles & Profiles

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

## Maps

- [NG MapMaker Interactive: Europe](#)
- [National Geographic Education: Europe MapMaker Kit](#)
- [NG Education: MapMaker Interactive: Europe—Land Cover](#)
- [NG Education: MapMaker Interactive: Europe—Satellite Map](#)
- [NG MapMaker 1-Page Map: Europe](#)

## Websites

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



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