

RESOURCE LIBRARY
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

Observing Physical and Cultural Landscapes

Students view photographs of Europe to determine if the photos match their own ideas about Europe. They search for geographic clues within the photos to learn more about the subjects shown.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

CONTENTS

3 PDFs, 15 Images, 1 Link

OVERVIEW

Students view photographs of Europe to determine if the photos match their own ideas about Europe. They search for geographic clues within the photos to learn more about the subjects shown.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/observing-physical-and-cultural-landscapes/>

DIRECTIONS

1. Practice differentiating between physical and cultural landscape features.

Draw a T-Chart on the board. Add the left column head: Physical or Natural Features, and the right column head: Cultural or Human Features. Shuffle and then tape each of the index cards you prepared ahead of time to the board, to the left or right of the chart, to serve as a word bank. Ask students to do a word sort by moving the words into the correct columns. Then

discuss the completed chart. Ask: *How did you know which words were physical, or natural, landscape features? How did you know which words were cultural, or human, landscape features?* Tell students that they will use their understanding of physical and human landscape features to make observations about locations in Europe in photographs.

2. Make observations about the physical and cultural landscapes in the Europe photo gallery.

Write the following questions on the board for students to refer to:

- *Does this photo look like Europe to you? Why or why not?*
- *Where do you think this is located? What clues in the photo helped you determine the location?*
- *What else can you see in this photo? What is happening? How can you tell?*

Distribute a copy of the worksheet Make Observations: Multiple Countries or Regions to each student. Project the Europe photo gallery so all students can view it. Be sure to cover the captions, which include location information, with a sheet of paper. Make sure students understand that the gallery includes images from different countries and regions of Europe. Pause on each photo and provide students with enough time to take notes about their observations about the physical and cultural landscapes. As students look at each photo, encourage them to think about the questions on the board. Continue until students have completed the worksheet for the full photo gallery. Students may have some difficulty classifying physical and human features in photos of landscapes when there is some ambiguity. For example, if a line of trees was planted for effect, students may not know if it should be classified as natural or human. Provide support, as needed.

3. Have students make inferences about the locations, places, and people in the photos.

Divide students into small groups. In groups, have students share the observations they made and note the differences and similarities between observations. Then have students use their observations as a basis to make inferences about the locations, the places, and the people and list them on the backs of their worksheets.

4. Discuss students' observations and inferences as a whole class.

Regroup as a whole class. Invite volunteers to share their observations and the inferences they made based on those observations. Allow other students to ask questions and comment.

5. Confirm and identify on a map the location of each photograph.

Project the Europe photo gallery a second time. Scroll through the gallery, pausing on each photo to read aloud its caption. Have students show, by raising their hands, if they correctly inferred the location of each. Invite volunteers to share what geographic clues helped them infer correctly. If time allows, use the MapMaker 1-Page Map of Europe to identify where each location is on a map.

Modification

In Step 2, model the observation of one, familiar landscape for the whole class before asking students to make observations using the Europe photo gallery.

Modification

This activity uses photographs from different countries and regions of Europe. You may choose to use photographs from one country or one region. If so, use provided worksheet Make Observations: One Country or Region.

Extending the Learning

- Have students search for other images of Europe either online, in [National Geographic Traveler magazine](#), or in magazines or other media. They can sort pictures into groups: those that match students' current understanding of Europe and those that do not match. Ask students to write descriptions and analyses of each picture to support their grouping.
- Have students work independently to read a book and look at its pictures or photographs. Have them complete the provided worksheet Make Observations: Fiction or Nonfiction Books.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Human Geography
- Physical Geography

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- view photos of Europe to determine if the photos match their own ideas about Europe
- search for geographic clues within photos to learn more about the subjects shown

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Multimedia instruction
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

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

- [Analyzing Geographic Information](#)
- [Asking Geographic Questions](#)
- [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 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

- Index cards
- Markers
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Prepared index cards (see "Other Notes")
- Transparent tape

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 this activity, prepare a set of index cards by writing the following words on separate cards: (physical landscape features) mountains, rivers, trees, landforms, bodies of water, climate, natural vegetation, soil; (cultural landscape features) house, dam, cars, education, settlement patterns, food, music, health, sports, transportation, and housing. If helpful, include a photo with each.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

In addition to using maps, making observations is another critical tool for understanding our world. In the field, discoveries are communicated to others in descriptions of our observations, and as such represent the varied perspectives of observers. For example, observers may select different phenomena to observe, may carry out observations in different ways, and may differ in how those observations are recorded. While students may not be able to take a field trip to foreign lands, you can provide opportunities for observation and discovery through the use of photographs, drawings, and writings. Making observations is a valuable skill that scientists use in the field.

This activity is useful for helping students to build visual landscape observations skills, and build and/or refine a mental construct for shared characteristics within a region. It is important for students to understand that regions are not uniform across their area. Geographers often establish sub-regions to help in understanding an area. For example, the

United States is divided into the following sub-regions: West, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. And according to the United Nations, the continent of Europe has four distinct geographic sub-regions: Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, and Western Europe.

Prior Knowledge

["mental construct of Europe"]

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. |
| cultural landscape | <i>noun</i> | human imprint on the physical environment. |
| culture | <i>noun</i> | learned behavior of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods. |
| landscape | <i>noun</i> | the geographic features of a region. |
| location | <i>noun</i> | position of a particular point on the surface of the Earth. |
| observation | <i>noun</i> | something that is learned from watching and measuring an object or pattern. |
| physical features | <i>noun</i> | naturally occurring geographic characteristics. |
| region | <i>noun</i> | any area on Earth with one or more common characteristics. Regions are the basic units of geography. |

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

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

Maps

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

Websites

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



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