

RESOURCE LIBRARY  
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

## Research Examples of Physical Geography

Students explore how specific features of physical geography affect nearby country borders. They conduct research on the North Sea, Scandinavia, the Strait of Gibraltar, and the Netherlands.

### GRADES

6 - 8

### SUBJECTS

*English Language Arts, Geography, Physical Geography*

### CONTENTS

4 PDFs, 4 Links

## OVERVIEW

Students explore how specific features of physical geography affect nearby country borders. They conduct research on the North Sea, Scandinavia, the Strait of Gibraltar, and the Netherlands.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/research-examples-of-physical-geography/>

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Build background about how countries share geographical features such as oceans.

Remind students about their decision-making in Lesson 5, Activity 1 regarding ocean and sea borders. Ask: *How do you think countries actually divide and share ocean resources?* Explain to students that each country abides by an international agreement establishing an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), an area extending 200 nautical miles off a country's coast. According to

this agreement, each country has the right to explore and exploit the living and nonliving things in its EEZ. Ask: *How might sharing a geographical feature, like an ocean, or a natural resource within it create problems between the countries that share them?* Students may mention disagreements surrounding environmental preservation, distribution of resources, commercial activity, residential and military occupation, and travel and tourism.

## **2. Have students compare and contrast possible conflicts around specific physical features.**

Ask students to keep in mind their ideas about how countries may disagree about sharing ocean resources. Then remind students of what they explored in Lesson 4: Conflict on the Danube. Two countries had to share the Danube River, leading to some conflict. Ask: *Do you think the same issues could cause conflict around an ocean? A mountain range? Another physical feature? How are each of these scenarios similar or different?* Capture students' ideas on the board.

## **3. Have students research case studies of countries' disputes over physical geography.**

Distribute a copy of the worksheet Physical Geography Research Project to each student. Then divide the class into small groups of four. Assign each group one of the four examples to research, using the provided websites. Give groups maps according to the examples they are assigned:

- Example 1: The North Sea—Map: Major Bodies of Water in Europe
- Example 2: Scandinavia—Map: Physical Map of Scandinavia
- Example 3: Strait of Gibraltar—Map: Major Bodies of Water in Europe
- Example 4: The Netherlands—Map: The Netherlands: Reclaimed Land

Tell students they will become experts on their assigned case study, and will need to be prepared to share their expertise with classmates in Lesson 5, Activity 3 of this unit. Have them turn in their completed worksheets, or publish them in the classroom so students can see or read their classmates' work.

# Modification

If you have limited computers and/or computer availability: Instead of having students research their own project, select one example for the class to explore in depth. Or, select two examples to research as a class and create a chart comparing and contrasting them.

## Modification

In Step 3, have students complete the North Sea (Example 1) research as a whole-class exercise. Then have the class continue with the three remaining case studies, supporting students as needed. Or, have students independently research one of the other three case studies.

## Informal Assessment

Evaluate students' completed Physical Geography Research Project worksheets.

## Extending the Learning

Encourage students to find a new example that is not listed, and research and report on it.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

- English Language Arts
- **Geography**
  - Physical Geography

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- research examples of physical features in Europe that intersect with country borders in interesting ways

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Reading
- Research

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
  - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
    - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
  - Learning and Innovation Skills
    - Communication and Collaboration
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Remembering
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Analyzing Geographic Information

## National Standards, Principles, and Practices

### NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 3:

People, Places, and Environments

- Theme 8:

Science, Technology, and Society

### 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 14:**

How human actions modify the physical environment

- **Standard 16:**

The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources

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

- **Standard 2:**

Communication and Collaboration

- **Standard 3:**

Research and Information Fluency

### **Preparation**

### **What You'll Need**

### **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- 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

Depending on the depth of the research, this activity could take one class period or up to several days.

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

### Background Information

Countries with ocean or sea borders have some control over a limited area extending into the ocean from their coastal borders. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was signed on December 10, 1982. According to it, every coastal country can establish an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) extending 370 kilometers (200 nautical miles) from shore. Within the EEZ, a coastal country has exclusive rights to the oil, gas, and other natural resources in the seabed up to 200 nautical miles from shore. Oil was discovered in the North Sea in the 1960s. Oil is one of the most valuable resources taken from the ocean today. The claim had to be divided among the many countries that border the North Sea—the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and Norway.

A peninsula is a piece of land jutting out into a lake or into the ocean. Because they are surrounded on three sides by water, peninsulas usually have long coastlines. "Peninsula" comes from two Latin words, which together mean "almost an island." The Scandinavian Peninsula in northern Europe is one physical feature where there are three countries: Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

A strait is a narrow passage of water that connects two larger bodies of water. One of the best known is the Strait of Gibraltar, which links the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Historically, straits have had great strategic importance. Whoever controls a strait is likely to control the sea routes of an entire region. The countries controlling the Strait of Gibraltar control the flow of traffic into and out of the Mediterranean Sea.

The edge of land that borders the ocean along a continent or an island is called the coast, or seacoast. Most people think of coasts as fixed, enduring boundaries that mark the land's end. Yet all coasts are constantly changing in an endless battle with the ocean. In some areas of Europe, countries struggle with their water borders. They have had to erect barriers against the ocean to prevent coastal flooding caused by high winds and tides or by seismic sea waves called tsunamis. For 800 years, the Netherlands has been successfully fighting against the North Sea to keep its coastline. Sixty-five percent of the Netherlands would be underwater today if it were not for the dikes constructed by humans.

## 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.
coast	<i>noun</i>	edge of land along the sea or other large body of water.
conflict	<i>noun</i>	a disagreement or fight, usually over ideas or procedures.
country	<i>noun</i>	geographic territory with a distinct name, flag, population, boundaries, and government.
exclusive economic zone (EEZ)	<i>noun</i>	zone extending 200 nautical miles off a country's coast. A country has the right to explore and exploit the living and nonliving things in its EEZ.
mountain range	<i>noun</i>	series or chain of mountains that are close together.
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.
ocean	<i>noun</i>	large body of salt water that covers most of the Earth.
physical features	<i>noun</i>	naturally occurring geographic characteristics.

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## For Further Exploration

### Articles & Profiles

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

### Maps

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

### Websites

- [MapMaker 1-Page Map: Netherlands](#)
- [National Geographic Education: National Teacher Leadership Academy \(NTLA\)](#)



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