Why People Live Near Coasts

Students look at a map of population density in the United States, describe the pattern of settlement they see near the coasts, and brainstorm and draw possible reasons for it.

Grades
K, 1, 2

Subjects
Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography

Contents
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Overview
Students look at a map of population density in the United States, describe the pattern of settlement they see near the coasts, and brainstorm and draw possible reasons for it.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

Directions
1. Show students the NG Education interactive map.
Display for students the United States on the NG Education interactive map, with the population density layer selected. Make sure students can identify major bodies of water—the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf of Mexico on the map. Then explain to students how they can tell where many people live and where few people live.
2. Have students locate where they live.
Help students locate the place where they live on the map. Ask: *Is it in an area that has many people? Or is it in an area that has few people?*

3. Ask students to describe the patterns they see.
Point out the East Coast and West Coast. Ask: *Do more people live near the coasts or away from the coasts?* Students should recognize that many more people live near the coasts than inland, although the Great Lakes and a few places in the interior, such as Atlanta, Georgia, are densely populated.

4. Have students brainstorm and draw why people might choose to live near the coasts.
Ask: *Why do most people live near the coasts?* Encourage students to think about how people move (transportation routes), weather, and climate. As an example, point out the desert regions of the West and describe why few people live there. Have students draw pictures that illustrate why people live near coasts.

**Informal Assessment**

Check students’ drawings to make sure they understand why people live near coasts. If needed, have students explain what their drawings show.

**OBJECTIVES**

**Subjects & Disciplines**

- Geography
  - Human Geography
  - Physical Geography

**Learning Objectives**

Students will:

- identify patterns of human settlement on a United States population distribution map
- brainstorm and draw possible reasons so many people live near the coast
Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Analyzing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 12:**
  The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement
- **Standard 14:**
  How human actions modify the physical environment

Preparation

What You’ll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE
Crayons
Drawing paper

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

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

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

RESOURCES PROVIDED: MAPS

- NG MapMaker Interactive: Population Density—United States

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Over half of the United States population lives within 50 miles of the coast. All of these people have an effect on the health of the ocean.

Prior Knowledge

Recommended Prior Activities

- Healthy Beaches
- How People Affect Ocean Animals and Plants

Vocabulary
Term | Part of Speech | Definition
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coast | noun | edge of land along the sea or other large body of water.

For Further Exploration

Websites


This activity is made possible by a generous grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program.

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