

RECOMMENDED GRADES: K-1



TIME NEEDED: 15-20 MINUTES

Description

Students explore the map of North America and learn about colors featured on the map.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- learn how to find physical and political features on a map by understanding the use of colors
- learn about the size and diversity of the North American continent

Materials

- Colored cones (5-10) (optional)

Preparation

2 minutes

- Place cones on the map ahead of time, or add them as students occupy the places featured to direct students' attention to these locations.

Rules



Have students remove shoes before walking on the map.

DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by directing students to sit on the floor along the base of the map with their feet facing north. Introduce the students to the giant map. Suggested introduction by the teacher:

Welcome to the National Geographic Giant Map of North America! Today you are going to explore this amazing map. You will learn how to read this map. You will explore, have fun, and learn a whole lot about maps and North America!

Give students two minutes to explore the continent on their own. When exploration time is over, have them return to their starting point.

2. Have students volunteer special sights they saw while they were walking on the map. Direct the observations to the colors that are on the map. Lead the students to the three dominant colors: White, Blue, and Gray.
3. Divide the class by three and place one-third of the students on White, one-third on Blue, and one-third on Gray. Spread students out so that the students on Blue are in oceans and seas surrounding the land (White). Be sure the students on Gray are in the biggest mountain ranges (Rockies, Appalachians, Sierra Madre, and Sierra Nevada). Ask students to volunteer what they think the colors represent. After a brief time of sharing, have the students on Blue make motions as though they are swimming in place, have the students on White lie flat on their backs and look up at the sky, and have the students on Gray make pointed “roofs” with their arms as if they are tall mountains.
4. Direct students to stand and look for examples on the map of “Blue inside White” or “White inside Blue.” Once they have found examples, tell them the Blue inside White is water (lakes and rivers), and the White inside Blue are islands. (Note: some islands of the Caribbean are not white because they are so small that the border color fills in all of the land area.)
5. Share information about North America:
 - North America is a **continent**. A continent is a very large amount of land.
 - Over 565 million people live in North America!
 - The highest **mountain** in North America is Denali, in Alaska.
 - The largest **lake** is Lake Superior.
 - The deepest **lake** in North America is Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories.
 - North America has many famous **rivers**, including the Mississippi River, the Colorado River, the Columbia River, and the Fraser River.
 - The biggest **island** in the world is Greenland.
6. Position the students within the United States and ask them to stand on big, thick colored lines (green). These are state boundary lines. The United States is one country made up of 50 states. All the states are the same color because they all belong to the same country (point out Alaska and Hawaii.) Have students hop from state to state, counting as they go and stopping at 10. Now, ask the students to look for other colored boundaries. Orange boundaries separate the provinces of Canada. There are ten of these (there are also three territories). Now ask students to observe other colors. The country of Mexico has a yellow border, and the countries of the Caribbean and Central America each have different colors. This tells us they are different countries.

7. Direct students to the place on the map where your school is.

- *What are the neighboring states?*
- *Are there any mountains, islands, lakes, or rivers close by?*

8. Wrap up this activity with the suggested closing:

We have explored the continent of North America. We have read this map and have discovered how we can use colors to understand where mountains, lakes, rivers, seas, and oceans are on the maps.

Some of you have gone swimming in the oceans and seas. Some of you were mountains. You all have been a special part of this map of North America, and now you are sitting right next to where we live!

We know there are other maps waiting for us, and now you will know how to read some of them.