

# Mapping South America

## Grade 5

### Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Examine different aspects of the South American continent, including its geography, climate, industry, and political boundaries.
2. Create a map of South America illustrating a particular aspect of the continent

### Materials:

- Examples of different types of maps: political, physical, and population
- Five large pieces of paper
- Internet access
- Printer
- Encyclopedias
- Atlases
- Colored markers for each group

### Procedures:

1. Note: Before beginning this lesson, draw a large outline of South America onto each of 4 large pieces of paper. You can find an outline at [South American Continent outline map](#). Enlarge the image on an overhead before tracing it onto large pieces of paper for the students to use.

As a class, look at different types of maps, such as political, physical, and population maps. Ask students to discuss what information the maps convey. For example, a political map shows the borders of countries and the locations of major cities. A physical map shows landforms. A population map shows the density of population throughout the region. Why is each type of map important? How and by whom is each type used?

2. Explain that in this lesson students will be creating different types of maps of South America to learn about different aspects of the continent. On a large piece of paper, draw a chart with four columns. Label them Political, Geography, Environment and Industry. Using the questions below as a guide, ask students to brainstorm what they know about South America for each of these topics. Write their ideas in the appropriate columns.
  - a. What countries and major cities can they name?
  - b. Where are the larger concentrations of people?
  - c. What are some major geographical features of the continent? (Amazon River, Amazon Rainforest, Andes Mountains, etc.)
  - d. What do they know about the climate and vegetation in different parts of South America?
  - e. What are some important industries and exports?
3. Divide the class into four groups and assign one of the topics listed above to each group. Give each group a large piece of paper with the prepared outline of South America on it. Explain that

the members of each group will study a different aspect of South America and will create a map to show what they've learned.

4. Give the members of each group the following questions to use as a guide as they create the maps. (How each group creates its map is the group's decision, but the map must answer all the questions.)
  - a. Political:
    - i. Identify the countries of South America (and their borders).
    - ii. Where are the capitals and major cities of South America?
  - b. Geography:
    - i. Where are the major geographic features of South America?
    - ii. What oceans and bodies of water border the continent?
    - iii. What are its major mountain ranges?
    - iv. What are its major rivers?
    - v. Locate and Label at least two or three of the following features on the map: island, isthmus, volcano, cape, gulf, plateau, falls, lake, or glacier.
  - c. Environment
    - i. Where are the different ecosystems in South America? (desert, rainforest, grassland, etc.).
    - ii. Label the ecosystems
    - iii. Where is the equator in relation to the continent?
    - iv. Label two areas with the greatest and least amounts of rainfall. Label two areas that have very high and very low temperatures.
  - d. Industry/ Major exports:
    - i. Show where the following crops are grown: bananas, potatoes, wheat, barley, cocoa, cotton, rice, sugar, coffee, oranges, and lemons.
    - ii. Show where some of the following industries are located: oil, mining (gold, copper, emeralds, silver, etc.)
    - iii. Which areas depend heavily on fishing?
    - iv. What other products are exported to the United States and other countries?
5. Provide appropriate atlases, books, and Web sites to help each group conduct its research. Each map must illustrate the group's answers to the questions above. Encourage students to be creative and to use symbols, color-coding, and other keys to show their information. They must also provide a key or legend for their maps. The following are helpful Web sites: Countries of the World - South America, Map Machine.
6. When groups have completed their maps, have them hang the maps around the classroom and present them to the class. Encourage students to consider the relationships among all the maps and refer to each other's maps in their presentations. For example, do they notice that certain crops or resources are found in specific ecosystems or terrains?
7. After the presentations, discuss the need for different types of maps. Would it be possible to have all the information on one map? Why would you refer to different kinds of maps? What kind of map do students think is used most often?