

# LESSON PLAN

## U.S. Geography

**Level:** Low Intermediate, Intermediate

**Suggested Length:** 1 or 2 class periods

### Civics Test Questions

- #44—What is the capital of your state?
- #88—Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States.
- #89—What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?
- #90—What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?
- #91—Name one U.S. territory.
- #92—Name one state that borders Canada.
- #93—Name one state that borders Mexico.
- #94—What is the capital of the United States?

### Key Vocabulary

estimated, population, territories, north, south, east, west  
landscape, canyon, forest, volcano, coastline, desert, island, plain, lake, mountain range

## Objectives:

Students will:

- discuss what they like about their hometown or city and what they would like to change
- identify geographic features (ocean, river, lake, island, mountain, desert)
- describe a famous place in the United States or in their home country
- identify and locate the two longest rivers in the United States
- identify and locate the five major U.S. territories
- identify and locate the U.S. coasts and oceans
- identify and label the capital of the United States and their home state
- name U.S. states that border Canada and Mexico

## Materials:

Globes, wall maps of the world, the United States, and your state

Sticky notes and markers

8.5" x 11" visuals

Handouts: *My Home in the United States*, *Map of the United States*, *Geography of the United States*, *America the Beautiful*, and *Civics Test Questions—U.S. Geography*

*Intermediate Level U.S. Geography Lesson Answer Key*



## Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

This lesson covers the geography content from the Civics Test items along with greater detail about the United States' geographic features and landscape. For this lesson, display world and U.S. maps on the wall and provide extras for students to share and examine. Map-reading skills are important and, at the intermediate level, students generally know everyday directional language. However, they may need help with some new geography vocabulary. The lesson includes a handout with a blank map of the United States. Throughout the lesson, students should refer back to that map and label key places.

This lesson introduces the concept of “home” and a few common English sayings related to it. In the discussion, students can share what they like about their home and what they might like to change. The readings continue about the United States, its individual states and borders as well as its varied landscape. Use the same process for reading each handout with your students. This process is described below in the instructions for the handout titled *Geography of the United States*. At the end of each

reading, students practice the specific test items covered in that handout. Suggested discussion questions can be used for whole-class and small-group discussion. An optional writing assignment allows students to practice composing descriptive paragraphs. Several websites are provided on particular topics. Some information in the readings, such as the population of the United States or the names of mountain ranges, goes beyond the scope of the test questions. This is to give context to the test items. Please assure your students that they will not need to know these details for the test. The final handout is a summary of all the Civics Test items covered in the lesson.

Instructions for each handout are described below. The **Key Vocabulary** found on the first page of the lesson plan is generally more advanced than the words in the vocabulary lists for the reading and writing portion of the test. However, learning these words will help students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in the lesson. Consider teaching this new vocabulary as part of your introduction to each handout.

**My Home in the United States:** Point out the sayings containing the word “home” at the top of the page. Discuss the meaning of each phrase and ask the students about similar sayings in their native language. Read over the paragraph together. Then, have the students form pairs or small groups of 4-5, and brainstorm what they like about where they live and what they would like to change. This discussion could focus on the students’

neighborhood, city, or state, or the United States in general. Circulate and provide guidance where needed. Then bring the class together for a group discussion of their ideas. On the board, draw a simple chart with two columns, labeled “Things I like about where I live” and “Things I would like to change.” Elicit the students’ ideas and write key words from their answers in the chart.

**Map of the United States:** Display a U.S. map and a world map on the wall and have extra U.S. maps for students to share at their desks. Have some sticky notes and markers available for labeling. Ask the class the name and location of their state. Ask a volunteer to find it on the U.S. map and have the student place the sticky note with the state name on the wall map. Following the instructions on the handout, continue in the same fashion with the other locations, including

their city or town, the state capital, neighboring states, and Washington, D.C. The students should follow along on their handouts and label this information on their map as you review. Be sure to practice the directional words: north, south, east, and west. To check their comprehension, ask your students random questions about where other states and cities are located in relation to where they live. (Note: you will be referring to this map handout later in the lesson.)

**Geography of the United States:** While reading these paragraphs, students should refer back to their U.S. map handout and the wall maps. Have the students read the paragraphs silently. Tell them to underline any new words while they read. When they finish, read the paragraphs aloud while the students listen silently. As you read each phrase or sentence, pause to ask if there are any words they do not know. Explain the new words in simple terms (**population=number of people in a specific place,**

**etc.**). Using the U.S. and world maps, point out (or have a volunteer locate) each place mentioned in the reading. Discuss the U.S. territories and help the students find them on the world map. Help the students identify and locate their state capital. When reviewing the section on the border states, have the students label each border state on their map handout. Assure your students that for the Civics Test they will need to name only one state that borders Mexico, one state that borders Canada,

one U.S. territory, and one of the longest U.S. rivers. After discussing the meaning of each sentence, read the paragraphs out loud again, this time without stopping. As a final step, go back to the beginning of the reading and model each sentence one at a time with the students repeating after you. If you wish, call on volunteers to take turns reading each sentence aloud. Then have the students

fill in the answers to the Civics Test items at the bottom of the handout and review them together, modeling the pronunciation of each question and answer. Point out that your students can find maps and interesting information on each state at [www.americaslibrary.gov/es/index.php](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/es/index.php).

**America the Beautiful:** Write **landscape** on the board and ask the students what it means (**scene, scenery, view, etc.**). Ask for some examples of landscapes (**mountains, rivers, beaches, etc.**). Write key words of the students' ideas on the board. Hopefully, some words will be vocabulary that they will read in these paragraphs. Discuss the photograph of the Mississippi River. Proceed with the paragraphs in the same manner as described above, having the students read silently while underlining new words. Read the paragraphs aloud for the class and discuss the new vocabulary. The students may encounter unfamiliar nouns and adjectives in this reading, so use the 8.5" x 11" visuals to illustrate those words. Practice the Civics Test item and have the students

fill in the answer. An optional writing activity follows. In it, the students write about a specific place in their native country using some of the nouns and adjectives they have learned.

The 8.5" x 11" visuals consist of the following places in the United States: The Teton Mountain Range; Augustine Volcano; Badlands National Park; Anacapa Island; Saguaro National Park; Bluestone National Scenic River; Bark Bay, Lake Superior; and, the Grand Canyon. Remind your students that they will not be asked about these places on the Civics Test. These photographs are provided for further discussion and added interest. Students can visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for additional information.

**Civics Test Questions—U.S. Geography:** The eight Civics Test items from this lesson are listed on this handout. This exercise can be used for pair work where the students take turns interviewing each other or be

assigned for homework. Your students can find more information about the United States and other countries at [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html).

## The Teton Mountain Range



*Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service.*

## Augustine Volcano



*Augustine Volcano, Alaska.  
Courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey.*

## Badlands National Park



*Badlands National Park, North Dakota.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service.*

## Anacapa Island



*Anacapa Island, Channel Islands National Park, California.*

*Courtesy of the National Park Service.*

## Saguaro National Park



*Saguaro National Park, Arizona.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service.*



## Bluestone National Scenic River



*Bluestone River, West Virginia.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service.*

## Bark Bay, Lake Superior



*Bark Bay, Lake Superior, Wisconsin.  
Courtesy of the Environmental Protection Agency.*

## The Grand Canyon



*North Rim of the Grand Canyon, Arizona.  
Courtesy of the National Park Service.*