

## Biomes of the United States Grades 6-8

### Introduction

This activity will teach students about the landscape and biomes of the United States. They'll map the biomes, look at pictures of the biomes, and create posters depicting the landscape, plants, animals, and weather in the biomes. Students will use Maps101 outline maps and an excellent educational Web site with information on the biomes. You'll therefore need to have a way for your students to access the Web in order for this lesson to be effective.

Time Frame: 3-4 class periods (including presentations)

### Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Draw the biomes of the United States on an outline map.
- Research their assigned biome and answer questions about it.
- Create posters depicting the things they'd see in their assigned biome.
- Fill in outline maps with picture of the things they'd see in other biomes.

National Social Studies Standards:

- 3: People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

National Geography Standards:

- 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.
- 7: The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth's surface.
- 8: The characteristics and spatial distributions of ecosystems on Earth's surface.

### Maps and Materials Needed

Materials Needed:

- United States outline map:  
[http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&id=14461:united-states&cid=100:outline](http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&id=14461:united-states&cid=100:outline) (two for each student and one additional map for each group to put on its poster; download and print the PDF files)
- Materials for making posters: poster board, crayons, markers, glue, scissors

### Procedure

1. Ask students if they know what the landscape looks like in different parts of the United States. What does it look like in Arizona? What about in the Pacific Northwest or in Florida? Tell them that they're going to learn more about the United States landscapes by studying the different *biomes* of this country. As they know, the country looks very different in different places. Some places get a lot of rain, and some get very little. Some are mountainous and some are flat. Some places have very cold and snowy winters, while other places stay warm all year. Because of these differences, these areas provide very different habitats for plants and animals. These different sections of the earth are called *biomes*.
2. Divide the class into small groups.
3. Give each student a United States outline map ([http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&id=14461:united-states&cid=100:outline](http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&id=14461:united-states&cid=100:outline) ).
4. Have groups take turns looking at the Biome Map at [http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/world\\_biomes.htm](http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/world_biomes.htm). Ask them to color the biomes of the United States onto their own outline maps. If they have trouble figuring out where the colors should go, tell them to use their best judgment but to pay attention to major geographical features, such as the Great Lakes, that appear on both maps.
5. Now assign each group one of the biomes in the United States: tundra, chaparral, grassland, taiga, desert, mountain zones, tropical rainforest, temperate evergreen forest, and temperate deciduous forest. Point out that all of the world's biomes except for polar ice can be found in the United States.
6. Have groups go to the What's It Like Where You Live site at <http://www.mbgnet.net/> to research their assigned biome. On their handout, they should record the following information about the biome: what states has this biome, what the landscape looks like, what types of plants and animals they can see there, and what the weather is generally like.
7. Ask groups to create posters that depict their assigned biomes. Each poster should include the following components: a United States outline map that shows the biome (so groups should be given additional outline maps onto which they can draw their assigned biome), drawings of the landscape, plants, animals, and weather, and captions to go along with the drawings.
8. Have groups present their posters to the class. Before the presentations begin, give each student another United States outline map. Immediately after each group has presented its poster, ask the rest of the students to draw some pictures in the appropriate areas of their outline maps to show what they've learned about that biome.

### Assessment Suggestions

Check to make sure that students have:

- Participated cooperatively in their groups.
- Accurately (to the best of their ability) drawn the United States biomes on their outline maps.
- Thoroughly answered the questions on their handout.

- Presented their posters in a clear manner, allowing all students in the group the opportunity to talk.
- Drawn pictures of other group's biomes onto their outline maps.

### Extension

Have more advanced students, such as eighth graders studying United States history, include in their posters a section on the native peoples and early settlers of their assigned section of the United States. They should provide text describing the ways in which the Native Americans and settlers adapted to the landscape and climate. They can use some of the historical maps at [http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=category&cid=83:history](http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=category&cid=83:history) to help show Native American cultures and settlement patterns.

## **Student Handout**

You're going to use the Internet to find out about the biome that your group is studying. Find your biome at the What's It Like Where You Live site at <http://www.mbgnet.net/>. Then answer the following questions about it:

1. What does it look like in this biome in the United States?

2. What is the weather like during the different seasons?

3. What types of plants can you find?

4. What types of animals can you see?