

Lesson 4: The Midwest

☐ Getting Started

The Midwest, or the American Heartland, is made up of the states in the middle of the country. Many factories can be found in the Midwest, and it is also known for its agriculture and the Great Plains. The winters can be harsh in the Midwest. Fewer people live in the Midwest than in the Northeast.

Stuff You Need

- *Smart About the Fifty States* by Jon Buller
- journal

Ideas to Think About

- What relationships and interactions exist between the state regions of the United States?
- How are the state regions of the country similar and different?
- How do the different regions shape American culture?

Things to Know

- The Midwest is known for its manufacturing and agriculture.
- The geography of much of the Midwest is prairie land, and the weather can be cold and windy.
- The Midwest is sometimes referred to as the Heartland of America.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read about the states in the Midwest in *Smart About the Fifty States*. On the "Midwest Resource Map" page, illustrate or list a resource or two that can be found in each of the states listed below. Some of the information for these pages will come from the book *Smart About the Fifty States*, but you should also use other online sources or books.

1. North Dakota

2. South Dakota

3. Illinois

4. Indiana

5. Iowa

6. Kansas

7. Nebraska

8. Missouri

9. Minnesota

10. Wisconsin

11. Ohio

12. Michigan

The Midwestern States**Activities**☐ **Activity 1: About the Midwest**

Using the "About the Midwest" sheets, fill in the information you learn about the Midwest states as described below. Some of the information for these pages will

come from the book *Smart About the Fifty States*, but you should also use other sources such as the Internet or an encyclopedia.

- States (List the names.)
- Climate (Describe the overall climate of the region and how it changes with the seasons.)
- Natural resources (List and/or illustrate at least five natural resources found in the region.)
- Important landforms and bodies of water (Describe important landform(s) and bodies of water in the region. Include at least one landform and one body of water.)
- Culture (Describe the people and their way of life. What unique traditions do they have? How are they recognized by the rest of the country?)
- Wildlife (Illustrate and label at least two plants and two animals found in the region.)
- Famous person (Describe a famous person from the region and what the person has accomplished.)
- Jobs (List two important industries in the region.)

To find more information about this region, use the following websites or an encyclopedia.

**Interactive Map of the Midwestern States**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13694/

Use this interactive map to learn about some of the interesting cities and geographic features of the Midwest.

**New World Encyclopedia: Midwestern United States**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13695/

☐ **Activity 2: Factories and Farms**

The products from the Midwest are in high demand from people across the country. Explore some products that contain resources made or grown in the Midwest. Your parent will tell you which option to complete.

Option 1

On the "Factories and Farms" (Option 1) page, you will find a list of resources and goods found in the Midwest. Brainstorm and list or illustrate products that are made

from these resources.

Option 2

On the "Factories and Farms" (Option 2) page is a list of materials manufactured or found in the Midwest. Look around your home, inside and out. Identify products that contain each of the materials. Many of your products probably contain resources from the Midwest.

Wrapping Up

Can you believe how different the Northeast, the Southeast, and the Midwest are from one another? Even though each region is in the U.S., the people, geography, resources, and environments are very different.

Which region do you think is most interesting so far? In the next lesson, we will continue our journey west. We are exploring the regions based on when people settled in them and when each region became part of the United States.

It's time to practice learning your state capitals. Watch the video at the following link and sing along.



Wakko's 50 State Capitals with Lyrics/Subtitles

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13696/

Midwest Resource Map

Directions: Label each state on the map. Illustrate a resource or two that can be found in each state. Put your illustrations on the map below.

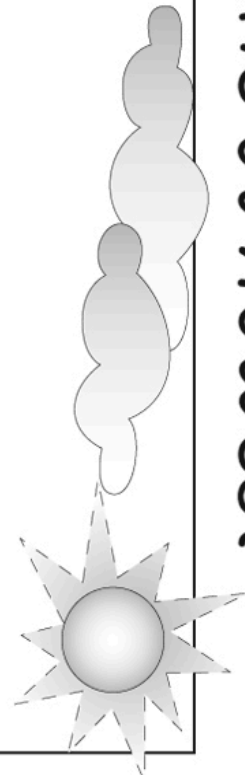


About the Midwest

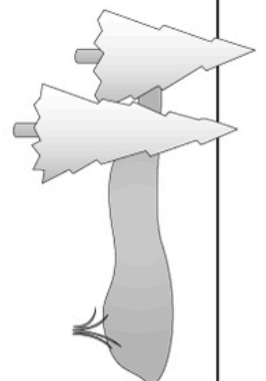
States



Climate

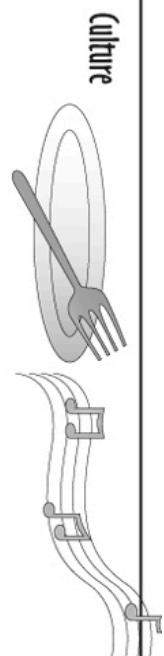
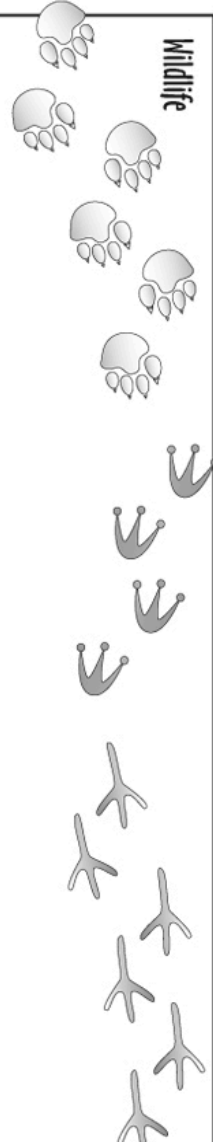


Natural Resources



Important Landforms and Bodies of Water



 Culture	
 Famous Person	 Wildlife
 Jobs	

FACTORIES AND FARMS

Directions: Brainstorm and list or illustrate products made from the resources found in the Midwest.

Resource:

Products:

CORN



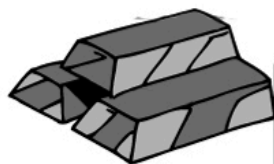
WHEAT



CATTLE



IRON



GOLD

FACTORIES AND FARMS

Directions: Illustrate or record products found in your home that contain each resource on the list below.

Resource:

Products:

CORN



WHEAT



CATTLE

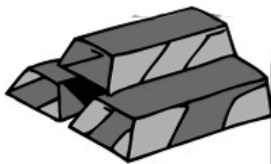


FE

IRON



GOLD



Lesson 4: The Midwest

Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

- What relationships and interactions exist between the state regions of the United States?
- How are the state regions of the country similar and different?
- How do the different regions shape American culture?



Things to Know

- The Midwest is known for its manufacturing and agriculture.
- The geography of much of the Midwest is prairie land, and the weather can be cold and windy.
- The Midwest is sometimes referred to as the Heartland of America.

⦿ Skills

- Evaluate the effects of supply and demand on business, industry, and agriculture. (SS)
- Describe the absolute and relative location of major landforms, bodies of water, and natural resources in the United States. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will continue her journey west across the United States, exploring the Midwest region, also known as America's Heartland. This region is known for its vast prairies, agriculture, and manufacturing industries, which play a crucial role in supplying food and goods to the rest of the country. The Midwest is home to major farming areas, the Great Lakes, and industrial cities, making it a center for both rural and urban life.

Begin by having your child locate the Midwestern states on her "State Regions of the United States" map (from Lesson 1). Encourage her to think about what she already knows about this region—has she learned about the Great Plains, the auto industry in Detroit, or the harsh Midwest winters? What products or foods does she think might come from this region?

Throughout this lesson, your child will explore the geography, climate, natural resources, culture, and economy of the Midwest, helping her understand its unique role in shaping American life.

Reading and Questions

1. *North Dakota: farming (durum wheat), ranching*
2. *South Dakota: gold, timber (trees), corn*
3. *Illinois: fertile soil (corn, soybeans, wheat), coal, limestone*
4. *Indiana: fertile soil (corn, soybeans, wheat), coal, limestone*
5. *Iowa: farming, ranching, popcorn*
6. *Kansas: wheat, popcorn, sunflower seeds, soybeans*
7. *Nebraska: corn, cows*

8. *Missouri: lead, limestone, fertile soil (soybeans, corn, and wheat)*
9. *Minnesota: iron ore, forests (timber), fertile soil (corn, soybeans, and wheat)*
10. *Wisconsin: cheese, milk, butter*
11. *Ohio: rubber products, coal, natural gas, fertile soil*
12. *Michigan: breakfast cereal, cars*

Your child researched and recorded natural resources found in the Midwest by reading *Smart About the Fifty States* and using additional sources. On the "Midwest Resource Map" page, she identified key resources in each state, such as corn in Iowa, wheat in Kansas, dairy in Wisconsin, and iron ore in Minnesota. This activity helped her understand how the Midwest's rich farmland, waterways, and natural deposits contribute to industries like agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation.

After she completes the map, review her findings together. Discuss how these resources impact local economies and national trade, and encourage her to think about how products from the Midwest are used in everyday life across the country.

Activities

Activity 1: About the Midwest

Your child researched and recorded key information about the Midwest region using *Smart About the Fifty States* and other sources. She identified the states in the region, described the climate and seasonal changes, and explored important natural resources like wheat, corn, dairy, and iron ore. She also learned about major landforms and bodies of water, such as the Great Plains, the Mississippi River, and the Great Lakes.

Additionally, she examined the culture and traditions of the Midwest, illustrated native plants and animals, and researched a famous person from the region. She also discovered the main industries that drive the Midwest's economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation.

After she completes the activity, review and discuss her findings together. Discuss any areas where she could add more detail or clarify information, and encourage her to think about how the Midwest's geography and resources shape life in the region and impact the rest of the country.

Answer Key:

- Answers will vary. Sample answers are provided below. Accept other accurate responses.
- States: North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Michigan.
- Climate: The Midwest has four distinct seasons, with cold, snowy winters and warm to hot summers. Spring often brings rain and thunderstorms, while fall has cooler temperatures and colorful leaves. The northern states generally have colder winters, and some areas experience tornadoes and severe storms.
- Natural Resources: Fertile soil, freshwater, forests (timber), coal, iron ore, limestone, petroleum (oil), and natural gas.
- Important Landforms and Bodies of Water: The Midwest includes the Great Plains, Central Lowlands, rolling hills, and areas of prairie. Important bodies of water include the Great Lakes, Mississippi River, Missouri River, and Ohio River. The region also contains the Black Hills of South Dakota and the Ozark Mountains of Missouri.

- **Culture:** The Midwest is known for its farming communities, small towns, large cities, and agricultural traditions. State fairs, county fairs, and festivals celebrating farming and local foods are popular. The region is also known for its strong manufacturing history, especially automobile production in Michigan. Chicago is famous for its architecture, music, and deep-dish pizza. Sports, including football and baseball, are important parts of life in many Midwestern communities.
- **Wildlife:**
Plants: Big bluestem grass, bur oak
Animals: American bison, white-tailed deer
- **Famous Person:** Abraham Lincoln lived in Illinois before becoming the 16th president of the United States. He led the country during the Civil War, issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and helped bring about the end of slavery in the United States.
- **Jobs:** Agriculture and manufacturing. Other important industries include healthcare, transportation, energy production, and tourism.

Activity 2: Factories and Farms

Your child will recognize that many products are made from resources that originate in the Midwest. Assign one of the options to your child. The first option is simpler because there are fewer parameters — your child can name any product that has the given resource. The second option is more challenging because she will have to find objects around the home that may contain resources from the Midwest.

Option 1

In this option, your child brainstorms products made from five important resources found in the Midwest. Review her list to be sure the products are correctly matched to each resource. Possible answers include corn (cornmeal, cereal, corn syrup, ethanol, and animal feed), wheat (bread, pasta, flour, and crackers), cattle (beef, milk, cheese, leather, and butter), iron (steel used to make cars, tools, machinery, and buildings), and gold (jewelry, coins, and electronic components). Discuss how farms, mines, and factories use the Midwest's natural resources to produce goods that people use every day. Encourage your child to consider how these resources support jobs and contribute to the region's economy.

Option 2

For this option, your child will find products around your house that contain materials found in the Midwest. Discuss your child's findings with her.

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- If you live in the Midwest, ask your child the following questions:
 - What do you enjoy about living in the Midwest?
 - Which other region in the U.S. do you think the Midwest is most similar to? Why?
 - What destinations would you encourage people to visit if they were planning a trip to the Midwest?
- If you do not live in the Midwest, ask your child the following questions:
 - What do you think it would be like to live in the Midwest?
 - What would you most like to experience if you visited the Midwest?
 - Which other region in the U.S. do you think the Midwest is most similar to? Why?

Things to Review

Review the facts and definitions from the Parent Overview and any other information you feel is important for your child to remember about the Midwest. Have your child practice singing along with the State Capitals video.