

Lesson 5: The Southwest

☐ Getting Started

Some sources indicate that there are only four states in the southwest region of the United States: Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. What this region lacks in the number of states, it makes up for in history and land size. The Southwest is known for its warm and dry climate as well as its amazing desert terrain.

Stuff You Need

- *Smart About the Fifty States* by Jon Buller
- journal
- permanent marker or paint pens* (Activity 2 - Option 1)
- terra cotta-colored clay

Ideas to Think About

- What relationships and interactions exist among 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

- States in the Southwest include Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.
- The Southwest has influenced the country with its art and architecture, which is inspired by Native American and Mexican culture.
- The weather in the Southwest is typically warm and dry.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read about the Southwest in *Smart About the Fifty States*. As you read about each state, think of three trivia clues about the state. For example, "In this state, you will find the most lakes." Read the clues for each state aloud to family members and see who can guess each state with the fewest clues.

1. Oklahoma

2. Texas

3. New Mexico

4. Arizona

The Southwestern States

Activities

☐ Activity 1: About the Southwest

Record information about the Southwest on your "About the Southwest" pages. Some of the information for these pages will come from *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 Southwestern States

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13697/

In this interactive map, you will learn about a variety of geographical features found in the American Southwest.



Encyclopedia Britannica: Southwest United States

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13698/

Click the "Students" button on the upper right to read a more detailed article

☐ Activity 2: Working with Clay

The Southwest has many ties to Native American, Spanish, and Mexican cultures. The uniqueness of these cultural groups is reflected in the art and architecture of the region. Early pioneers and inhabitants depended on natural resources found in the

environment. There was no way to transport goods from one region to another. For this activity, you will complete one of the following options. Talk to a parent about which option you want to complete.

Option 1: Clay Pot

For this option, you will create a clay pot. Historically, pottery has served a useful purpose. Early civilizations needed pots for mixing, eating, and carrying things. Today, pottery in the Southwest is an artistic expression of the Southwest culture. The following websites have pictures of pottery from the Southwest.



Pottery Southwest

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13699/



Southwest Indian Pottery

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13700/

Scroll down the page and click on an image to view images of pottery from that area/Indian tribe.

Create a clay pot using the terra cotta-colored clay. Find a pot style from your research and try to recreate its shape. After the pot has dried, use permanent marker or paint pens to decorate it. Be sure that the decorations reflect the styles and colors of the Southwest. Reds, browns, and turquoise are common southwestern colors. You may also want to create impressions in the clay with natural materials.

Option 2: Adobe Homes

Create an adobe home using clay. Since there are few trees in the Southwest, people used dirt to build their homes. Adobe is made mostly of sand, clay, dirt, and water. Adobe is often used on homes, red tile roofs, and arched entryways.

Much of the architecture in the Southwest reflects Mexican and Spanish styles. Look at pictures of both ancient dwellings and modern-day Southwest architecture. The following websites contain pictures and information on Southwest homes:



Santa Fe Architecture

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13701/

Read the sections on this webpage titled "Santa Fe Architecture" and "Pueblo Style."

**Pueblo architecture**www.beyondthepage.com/link/13702/

Read the section titled "Pueblo architecture."

Draw architectural plans for an ancient or modern-day dwelling in the Southwest or create a dwelling using the clay. You can add details to your clay model using natural materials such as wood and stone.

Wrapping Up

Great job exploring the Southwest region! You learned about the warm, dry climate, unique desert landscapes, and rich cultural history influenced by Native American, Mexican, and Spanish traditions. From adobe homes and colorful pottery to the Grand Canyon and vast plains, the Southwest is full of fascinating history and natural beauty.

Think about what you found most interesting—was it the architecture, the art, or maybe the food? How does this region compare to where you live? Every part of the United States has something special, and now you know how the Southwest has shaped American culture in so many ways!

In Lesson 2, you started working on "Learn the 50 States" at the following link. See if you can advance a few more levels.

**Learn the 50 US States**www.beyondthepage.com/link/13703/**Life Application**

Many Americans enjoy foods of the Southwest, sometimes called Tex-Mex. Visit a Tex-Mex restaurant, and enjoy the salsa and chips!

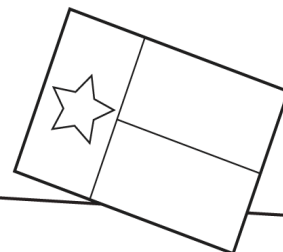
SOUTHWEST TRIVIA

Oklahoma

Clue #1: _____

Clue #2: _____

Clue #3: _____



Texas

Clue #1: _____

Clue #2: _____

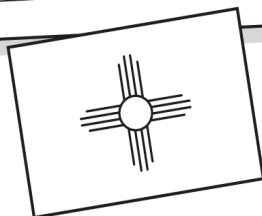
Clue #3: _____

New Mexico

Clue #1: _____

Clue #2: _____

Clue #3: _____



Arizona

Clue #1: _____

Clue #2: _____

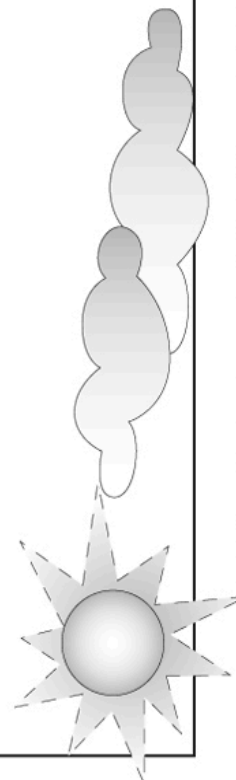
Clue #3: _____

About the Southwest

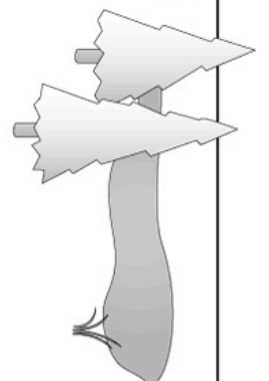
States



Climate

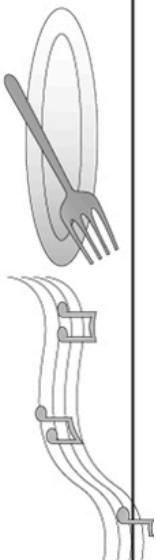
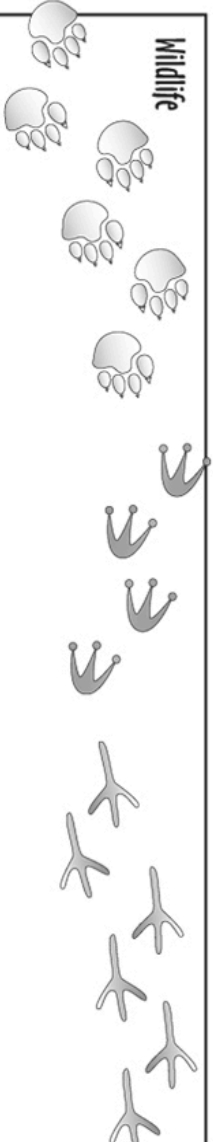
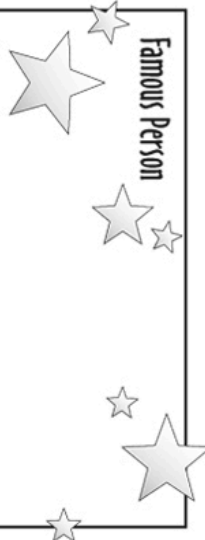
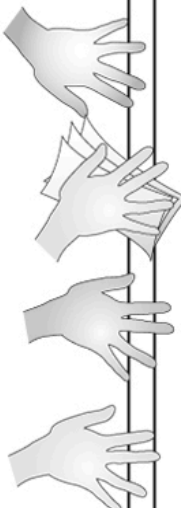


Natural Resources



Important Landforms and Bodies of Water



	Culture 
	Wildlife 
Famous Person 	Jobs 

Lesson 5: The Southwest

Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

- What relationships and interactions exist among 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

- States in the Southwest include Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.
- The Southwest has influenced the country with its art and architecture, which is inspired by Native American and Mexican culture.
- The weather in the Southwest is typically warm and dry.

🕒 Skills

- Describe a variety of regions in the United States. (SS)
- Describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States, past and present. (SS)
- Identify ways people use natural resources to meet their basic needs. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will continue his journey west to explore the Southwest region of the United States. This region is unique in its landscape, history, and culture, shaped by its Native American, Spanish, and Mexican influences. The Southwest is known for its vast deserts, red rock formations, and dry climate, as well as its rich traditions in art, architecture, and cuisine.

Begin by having your child locate the Southwestern states—Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona—on his State Regions of the United States map (from Lesson 1). Ask him what he already knows about the region—has he heard about the Grand Canyon, adobe homes, or the influence of Native American pottery and jewelry? What does he think life would be like in a place with hot, dry summers and limited water sources?

Throughout this lesson, your child will explore the geography, climate, natural resources, industries, and culture of the Southwest. He will discover how early civilizations adapted to their environment, how the land has shaped the region's economy, and how the Southwest continues to influence American culture, art, and food today. If possible, take your child for a special dining experience at a Tex-Mex restaurant. Discuss the fact that Tex-Mex food has spread to other regions of the United States.

Reading and Questions

1. *Oklahoma (Answers may vary) 1. The nickname is the Sooner State. 2. The capital is Oklahoma City. 3. Home to Woody Guthrie 4. Location of the Trail of Tears 5. Home to cattle, wheat, oil, and twisters 6. Home to the American Indian Hall of Fame*

2. *Texas (Answers may vary.) 1. The nickname is the Lone Star State. 2. The capital is Austin. 3. Home of President George W. Bush. 4. Famous for oil wells, cows, and cowboys. 5. Famous for chili and other Tex-Mex food. 6. The state flower is the bluebonnet. 7. Home to armadillos, Big Bend National Park, longhorn cattle, The Alamo, whooping cranes, and Johnson Space Center.*
3. *New Mexico (Answers may vary.) 1. The nickname is Land of Enchantment. 2. The capital is Santa Fe (the oldest capital city in the US). 3. Home to Georgia O’Keeffe. 4. The symbol on the state flag is the sun sign of the Zia Pueblo people. 5. Home to Anasazi Cliff Dwellings, Albuquerque Balloon Festival, chili peppers, Taos Pueblo, Roswell, and Carlsbad Caverns. 6. The first atomic bomb exploded in 1945.*
4. *Arizona (Answers may vary.) 1. The nickname is Grand Canyon State. 2. The capital is Phoenix. 3. Home to Wyatt Earp and Geronimo. 4. Products: copper, cotton, and cattle 5. Tools and weapons found there show that people lived there at least 12,000 years ago. 6. Navaho and Hopi Reservations, Meteor Crater, and the Sonoran Desert are located there.*

Encourage your child to set aside time to play the Southwest Trivia Game with family members. In this game, he will read one clue at a time about a state in the Southwest region, while others try to guess which state he is describing. The goal is for family members to guess the correct state with as few clues as possible.

This activity not only reinforces what he has learned about the history, geography, and culture of the Southwest, but it also promotes critical thinking and recall skills. After the game, discuss any interesting facts he learned and encourage him to share which state he found most fascinating and why.

Activities

Activity 1: About the Southwest

Review your child's recorded information about the Southwest region, ensuring that key details about the states, climate, natural resources, geography, culture, and economy are included. Ask him to explain his findings, encouraging him to think about how the landscape and climate shape the way people live, work, and interact in the region.

If needed, guide him in expanding on certain areas, such as adding more examples of wildlife, famous figures, or major industries. Discuss any connections he noticed between the Southwest and other regions he has studied, helping him build a broader understanding of how different areas of the U.S. influence one another.

Answer Key:

- Answers will vary. Sample answers are provided below. Accept other accurate responses.
- States: Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.
- Climate: The Southwest generally has hot, dry summers and mild winters, although the climate varies across the region. Arizona and New Mexico have large desert areas with very little rainfall. Texas and Oklahoma experience more rainfall, especially in their eastern areas, and can have severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Mountainous areas have cooler temperatures and may receive snow in winter.
- Natural Resources: Petroleum (oil), natural gas, copper, coal, uranium, fertile soil, and grazing land.

- **Important Landforms and Bodies of Water:** The Southwest includes the Grand Canyon in Arizona, the Rocky Mountains in New Mexico, the Great Plains in Texas and Oklahoma, and large desert areas such as the Sonoran Desert. Important bodies of water include the Rio Grande, Colorado River, Red River, and Gulf of Mexico.
- **Culture:** The Southwest has a rich cultural heritage influenced by Native American, Mexican, Spanish, and Anglo-American traditions. The region is known for its rodeos, cowboy culture, ranching, and Southwestern foods such as tacos, enchiladas, and chili. Native American arts, including pottery, weaving, and jewelry making, are important traditions. The Southwest is also recognized for its desert landscapes, historic missions, and distinctive adobe architecture.
- **Wildlife:**
Plants: Saguaro cactus, prickly pear cactus
Animals: Roadrunner, coyote
- **Famous Person:** Sandra Day O'Connor grew up on a cattle ranch in Arizona and became the first woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court in 1981. She helped make important legal decisions during her 25 years on the Court.
- **Jobs:** Oil and natural gas production, agriculture and ranching. Other important industries include tourism, mining, aerospace, and technology.

Activity 2: Working with Clay

Your child will select one of two options. We have provided clay with your curriculum package. Follow the instructions on the clay package.

Option 1: Clay Pot

For this option, your child will research traditional Southwest pottery and create his own clay pot, inspired by the styles, shapes, and designs used by Native American and Mexican artisans. He will explore how pottery was historically used for mixing, eating, and carrying items, as well as how it continues to be a significant artistic expression of the region today.

After shaping the pot from terra cotta-colored clay, he will decorate it using permanent markers or paint pens, incorporating traditional Southwest colors like red, brown, and turquoise. He may also add impressions or textures using natural materials.

Review his final piece together, discussing the historical significance of pottery in the Southwest and how different cultural influences have shaped the region's artistic traditions.

Option 2: Adobe Homes

Your child will research traditional Southwest adobe homes, discovering how limited tree availability in the region led early settlers and Native American communities to build homes using sand, clay, dirt, and water. He will explore how Mexican and Spanish influences have shaped Pueblo-style architecture, which often features flat roofs, thick walls, red tile roofs, and arched entryways.

After studying images of ancient dwellings and modern Southwest architecture, he will either draw architectural plans or build a clay model of an adobe home. To add realism, he may include wood, stone, or textured details to mimic the appearance of traditional adobe structures.

Once he completes the project, review his creation together and discuss how Southwest architecture reflects both historical and environmental adaptations. If possible, encourage him to compare traditional

adobe homes to homes in other U.S. regions, noting how climate and available materials influence building styles.

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- (If you don't live in the Southwest) What would you enjoy about the Southwest?
- (If you do live in the Southwest) What do you enjoy about living in the Southwest?
- How does the Southwest compare to the Northeast? Which region do you think would be a better place to live? Why? *(The Southwest and the Northeast are very different. The Southwest is warm and dry, with lots of deserts and big open spaces. The Northeast has all four seasons, with cold, snowy winters and hot summers. The Northeast has a lot of big, old cities like New York and Boston, while the Southwest has wide-open land and places like the Grand Canyon.)*

Which region is better to live in depends on what you like! If you enjoy warm weather, space, and deserts, the Southwest might be best. If you like seeing the leaves change color in the fall, living near big cities, and having all four seasons, you might prefer the Northeast.)

- How would you describe the culture of the Southwest? *(The culture of the Southwest is shaped by Native American, Mexican, and Spanish influences. You can see it in the adobe-style houses, colorful pottery, and traditions like rodeos and cowboy life. People in the Southwest eat a lot of Tex-Mex food, like tacos, burritos, and salsa. The region is also famous for its beautiful landscapes, like deserts and red rock canyons, which inspire a lot of art and music.)*

Things to Review

Review the facts about the Southwest listed in the "Things to Know" section found at the beginning of the overview.

Life Application

If possible, take your child for a special dining experience at a Tex-Mex restaurant. Discuss the fact that Tex-Mex food has spread to other regions of the United States.