

Lesson 6: The West

☐ Getting Started

People living in America gradually migrated from the eastern seaboard to the West. Read pages 60-61 in *Smart About the Fifty States*. These pages explain how the United States grew. The West has wide-open spaces, and the population is not as dense as it is in other regions of the country. There are some very large cities in the West: Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, to name a few. The West has a rich history involving cowboys, gold, oil, and cattle. There have been many movies made about the "Old West."

If you are using the "Timeline of American History," record that the Louisiana Purchase took place in 1803, western land was won from Mexico in the Mexican-American War in 1848, and The Oregon Treaty was signed in 1846.

Stuff You Need

- "Timeline of American History"* (optional)
- *Smart About the Fifty States* by Jon Buller
- blue and brown icing
- cardboard
- chocolate chips
- cookie dough
- rolling pin
- toothpick

Ideas to Think About

- What relationships and interactions do residents have with the states in which they live?
- How does the geography of a state affect the culture?

Things to Know

- The western region includes the states of California, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Montana, and Oregon.
- The climate and geography vary in different parts of the West. Some parts have flat and dry deserts; other parts have dense forests and mountain ranges; and still others have coastal climates on the ocean.
- In the West, people enjoy swimming in the ocean, skiing in the mountains, and going to the rodeo.
- Relief maps are three-dimensional representations of the terrain found in a geographic area. It is a type of map that shows the shape and height of the land, like mountains, valleys, and hills.

☐ **Reading and Questions**

In *Smart About the Fifty States* read about the states in the West. After reading about them, add a major landform and body of water to each state on the map. You can use the book and other resources as needed.

The Western States**Activities**☐ **Activity 1: About the West**

On the "About the West" sheets, record the following information about the states in the West.

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 Western States**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13704/

Use the interactive map to discover information about the geography and people of the Western United States.

**New World Encyclopedia: Western United States**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13705/

☐ **Activity 2: Relief Map of the West**

The West has some amazing mountains and bodies of water. Maps that show mountains and bodies of water are called relief maps. Relief maps are three-dimensional representations of the terrain found in a geographic area. A relief map feels bumpy to the touch. For this activity, you will create a relief map of the West. Your map will actually be a cookie! Follow the instructions on the "Cookie Relief Map of the West" activity page. Ask a parent for help, especially with the baking step. Share your cookie with a parent, and then ask for permission to eat your geographical masterpiece.

Wrapping Up

The West is a unique region and is the youngest region of our country. When the pioneers moved out west, they did not know what they would encounter. But they knew they would find free land and possibly oil or gold.

In Lesson 3, you started working on "US Capitals" at the following link. See if you can advance a few more levels.



US Capitals

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13708/

Life Application

Watch an old western movie. Look for examples of the culture, geography, and weather that you learned about in today's lesson.

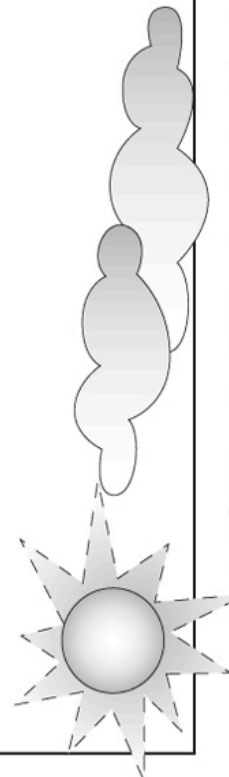
Geography of the West

Directions: Illustrate and label a landform or body of water found in each state.

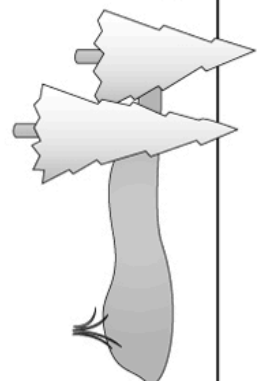


ABOUT THE WEST

Climate



Natural Resources

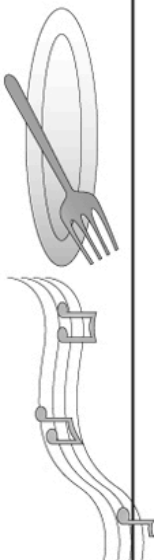
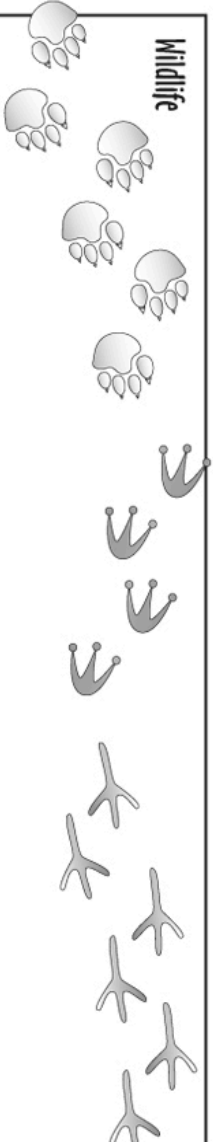


Important Landforms and Bodies of Water



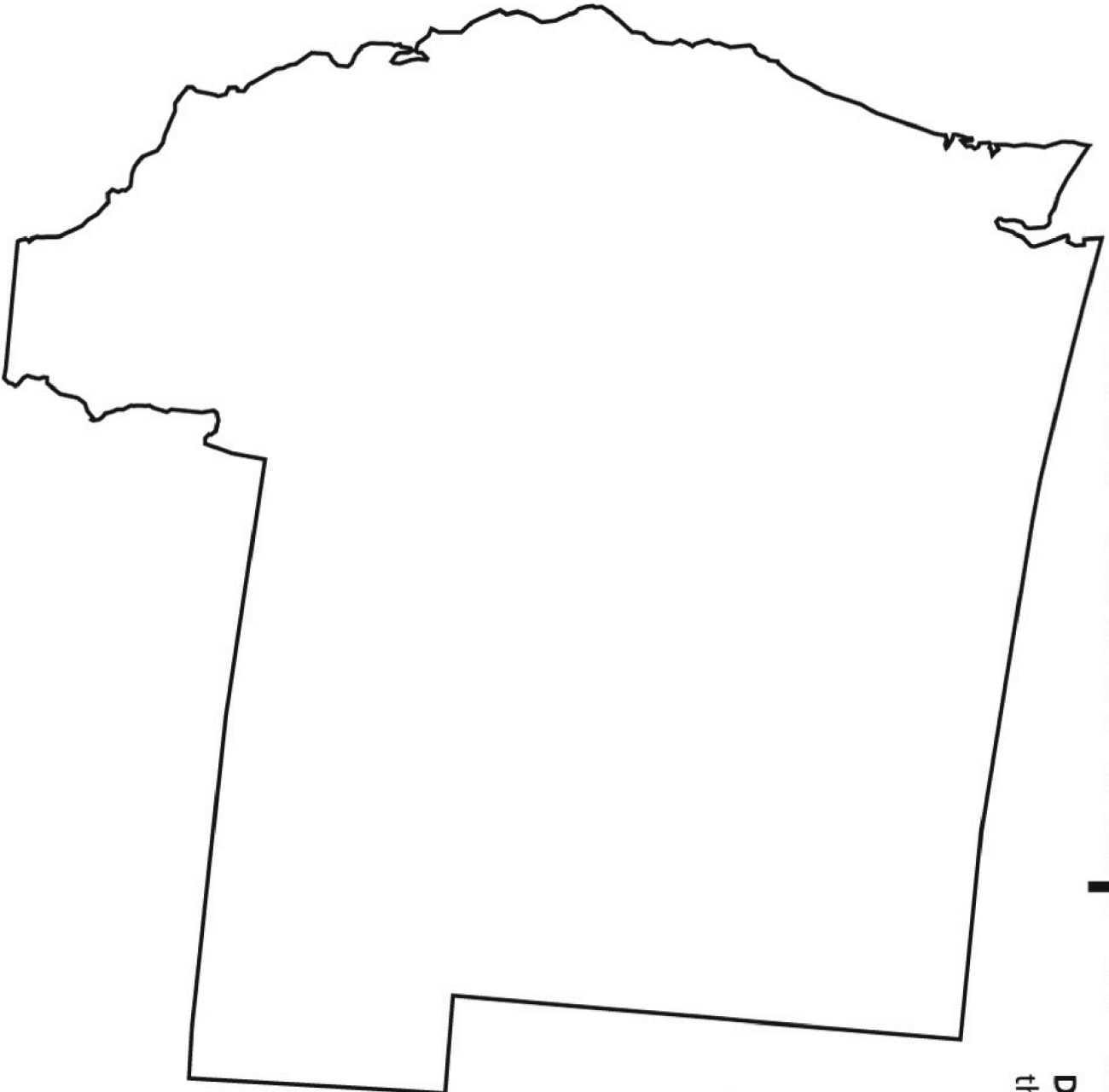
States



	Culture 
	Wildlife 
Famous Person 	
Jobs 	

Cookie Relief Map of the West

Directions: Create the relief map using the pattern on this page.



1. Trace the pattern of the West on cardboard.
2. Roll out cookie dough in the shape of the West. Place the cardboard on top and cut around it. Then remove the cardboard from the cookie dough.
3. Bake the cookie.
4. Use a toothpick to trace important rivers. A small, round, flat object can be used to make indentions in the dough for lakes.
5. When the cookie cools, use chocolate chips and chocolate icing for the landforms; trace the lakes and rivers in blue icing.

Lesson 6: The West

Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

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Things to Know

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- The climate and geography vary in different parts of the West. Some parts have flat and dry deserts; other parts have dense forests and mountain ranges; and still others have coastal climates on the ocean.
- In the West, people enjoy swimming in the ocean, skiing in the mountains, and going to the rodeo.
- Relief maps are three-dimensional representations of the terrain found in a geographic area. It is a type of map that shows the shape and height of the land, like mountains, valleys, and hills.

⦿ Skills

- Explain patterns of settlement at different time periods. (SS)
- Describe the distribution of settlement in the United States. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will complete her journey across the continental United States by exploring the West. This region is known for its vast open spaces, towering mountain ranges, and diverse climates, from arid deserts to lush forests and coastal landscapes. The West played a key role in America's expansion, offering pioneers the promise of gold, oil, and new opportunities.

As your child learns about the history, geography, and culture of the West, she will see how this region has shaped American identity—from cowboys and cattle ranches to Hollywood and technology hubs. She will explore the major cities, natural landmarks, and industries that define the area, helping her understand how geography influences settlement patterns and daily life.

Encourage her to think about how the West compares to other regions and what makes it unique. What traditions, jobs, and lifestyles have developed because of its land and climate? Through reading, mapping, and hands-on activities, she will gain a deeper appreciation for this influential region of the United States.

Reading and Questions

Your child will draw and label a significant landform and body of water for each state in the West, reinforcing her understanding of the region's diverse geography. Encourage her to use maps and other resources to explore mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, and deserts unique to each state. As she completes the activity, discuss how these geographical features impact climate, wildlife, and human activities in the region.

Answer Key:

- Answers will vary but may include:
- Washington: Puget Sound, Columbia River, Snake River, Columbia River Gorge, Mt. Rainer, Mt. St. Helens, Olympic Peninsula Rain Forest, Rocky Mts., Cascade Mountains
- Oregon: Columbia River, Snake River, Crater Lake, Mt. McLoughlin, Cascade Mountains, Mt. Hood, Willamette Valley, Coos Bay, grasslands
- Idaho: Snake River, Shoshone Falls, Rocky Mountains, Craters of the Moon National Monument
- Montana: Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone River, Glacier National Park
- Wyoming: Old Faithful, Rocky Mountains, Devil's Tower, Bridger-Teton National Forest
- California: Pacific Ocean, Death Valley, Mojave Desert, Lake Tahoe, Mt. Shasta, Redwood Forest, Yosemite Falls, Mount Whitney
- Nevada: Lake Tahoe, Pyramid Lake, Battle Mountain, Boundary Peak, Yucca Flat, Lake Mead, Colorado River, Black Rock Desert
- Utah: Great Salt Lake, Bonneville Salt Flats, Zion Narrows Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Lake Powell, Uinta Mountains,
- Colorado: Colorado River, San Juan River, Rio Grande, Arkansas River, South Platte River, Rocky Mountains, Pikes Peak, Great Plains

Activities**Activity 1: About the West**

Review your child's notes about the geography, culture, and economy of the American West. Encourage her to elaborate on key details, such as how the region's climate affects agriculture and daily life, how natural resources contribute to industry, and how cultural traditions shape the identity of the West. Discuss any additional insights or connections she may have made, and help her reflect on how this region compares to others she has studied.

Answer Key:

- Answers will vary. Sample answers are provided below. Accept other accurate responses.
- States: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado.
- Climate: The West has a wide variety of climates. Coastal areas generally have mild temperatures, with wet winters and drier summers. Desert regions have hot, dry summers and cooler winters, while mountainous areas experience cold, snowy winters and mild summers. The Pacific Northwest receives significant rainfall, while parts of Nevada and Utah are very dry.
- Natural Resources: Timber, gold, silver, copper, coal, natural gas, petroleum (oil), fertile soil, and freshwater.
- Important Landforms and Bodies of Water: The West includes the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Nevada, Cascade Range, Great Basin, and Great Salt Lake Desert. Important bodies of water include the Pacific Ocean, Colorado River, Columbia River, Snake River, and Great Salt Lake. The region is also home to famous natural landmarks such as Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite Valley, and Lake Tahoe.
- Culture: The West is known for its diverse population, outdoor recreation, and pioneering history. Native American cultures have shaped the region's traditions, art, and history. Ranching, rodeos, and cowboy traditions remain important in many areas. California is famous for Hollywood and the entertainment industry, while the Pacific Northwest is known for its forests and outdoor lifestyle. The region is also recognized for its national parks, skiing, hiking, and technological innovation.

- Wildlife:
Plants: Giant sequoia, Douglas fir
Animals: Grizzly bear, elk
- Famous Person: Walt Disney moved to California as a young adult and became a famous animator, filmmaker, and entrepreneur. He helped create Mickey Mouse, produced groundbreaking animated films, and opened Disneyland in Anaheim, California, in 1955.
- Jobs: Technology and agriculture. Other important industries include tourism, forestry, mining, entertainment, and aerospace.

Activity 2: Relief Map of the West

Spend some time looking at relief maps with your child. The following websites provide great images:

Assist your child as she bakes and decorates her cookie relief map, ensuring she accurately represents mountains, rivers, and other landforms using icing, chocolate chips, or other edible materials. As she works, encourage her to compare her map to actual relief maps, discussing how the geography of the West influences climate, industry, and daily life. Once the project is complete, take a moment to review her map together before enjoying a well-earned treat!

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- (If you do not live in the West) What would you enjoy most about visiting the West?
- (If you live in the West) What do you enjoy about living in the West?
- What do you think is the most incredible landform in the West? Body of water? *(Answers will vary but may include one of the most incredible landforms in the West, the Grand Canyon, because it is so deep and colorful, and it took millions of years to form. A really cool body of water is the Great Salt Lake in Utah, because it is so salty that people can float in it without sinking!)*
- How do you think the geography of a region impacts the people who live in the region? *(The geography of the West affects how people live because of the different climates and landscapes. In places with deserts, like Arizona, people build houses that keep them cool, and they have to be careful with water use. In the mountains, people enjoy skiing and hiking, and they wear warm clothes in the winter. Near the coast, people can go surfing and fishing, and the cities there are often very busy.)*
- How has the West shaped American culture? *(The West has had a big influence on American culture! Cowboys and ranching became famous because of cattle farms. The Gold Rush brought lots of people looking for fortune. Hollywood made movies and TV shows that are famous all over the world. The West is also home to big technology companies like Google and Apple, which have changed the way people use computers and phones.)*

Things to Review

Review the states that are in the West. Discuss how people in the West interact with the environment.

Special Notes

Let your child watch a movie about "The Old West" to get a feel for the culture and the environment. Students will study Westward Expansion in a future unit.