

Lesson 9: People and the Environment

☐ Getting Started

Today you will explore ways that people in the various regions relate to their environments. As people inhabit a region, they change the geography of the land in order to meet their needs and to make their lives easier.

Stuff You Need

- *Smart About the Fifty States* by Jon Buller
- colored pencils or markers

Ideas to Think About

- What relationships exist between living things and their environment?
- How do population growth, movement, and technological advancements affect the environment?

Things to Know

- People change the environment in order to meet their needs.
- Transportation and communication advancements often change the geography of the land.

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Modifying the Environment

As our nation grows in population, the geography changes. In what ways have Americans modified the land in order to transport people and goods from place to place? One example is railroads. Land had to be cleared from coast to coast so that the track could be laid. There are many other examples, and your job in this activity is to come up with some other ideas for how Americans have modified the land for transportation.

Now think of ways that the environment has been changed in order to make communication easier. One example is telephone poles. Wood had to be cut, and the telephone postholes had to be dug. Once a telephone pole is up, the landscape is changed.

People have also modified their environment to meet their needs for water, food, and shelter. This may look different in each region, depending on what resources are available. Some examples include clearing land for farming and creating lakes for fresh water.

On the "Modifying the Environment" pages you will find an outline of each region. Think of ways the geography of the land has been modified, and illustrate or describe your ideas. Record an example of change in each region related to transportation, technological advances, and meeting basic needs.

☐ **Activity 2: Geography Songs**

Two popular songs that reflect our relationship with the land are "God Bless America" and "This Land is Your Land." You can find the words to these songs on the "Geography Songs" page. Sing the songs aloud as you watch the following videos. If you do not know the songs, ask a parent to help you. If you play an instrument, play the song while you sing.



God Bless America

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13716/



This Land is Your Land

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13717/

☐ **Activity 3: Geography Song or Geography Trivia**

For your final activity related to Americans and land, select one of these options.

Option 1: Region Song

Write a song about the region in which you live. The lyrics should reflect the geography of the land and the resources. Give your song a title, at least two verses, and a chorus. It might be helpful to select a familiar tune and write the words to fit the tune. When you finish your song, sing it for your family.

Option 2: Geography Trivia

Make up a trivia game for the region in which you live. List about twenty facts about the environment in different categories. Categories include resources in the environment, how people interact with the environment, climate, and landforms/bodies of water. Each question will have an answer. The questions may be about a specific state or about the region in general. Refer to the "About the

_____ (region)" pages you completed in previous lessons, as well as *Smart About the Fifty States*.

Use the "Geography Trivia" pages to record your ideas. Then play the game with your family. Ask the questions and let players answer. The first person to give the correct answer receives a point. At the end of the game, the player with the most points wins.

Wrapping Up

What did you learn about ways people have modified the environment of the land we call America? Review some of the reasons the environment has been changed.

In Lesson 6, you continued working on "US Capitals" at the following link. See if you can advance a few more levels.



US Capitals

www.beyondthepage.com/link/13718/

Life Application

As you are riding in your car, look for ways people have changed or modified their environment.

Modifying the Environment

Directions: Label each region. List one example, in each category, of how the geography of the land has been modified in the region. Your examples can be from the past or the present. It may be helpful to reference the pages you created for each region and the *Smart About the Fifty States* book.

Region	Transportation	Technology	Basic Needs
 _____			
 _____			

Region			
Transportation			
Technology			
Basic Needs			



Geography Songs

God Bless America

by Irving Berlin

God Bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her, and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home.



America the Beautiful

by Katharine Lee Bates

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness
And every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for halcyon skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the enameled plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
Till souls wax fair as earth and air
And music-hearted sea!



O beautiful for pilgrims feet,
Whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
Till paths be wrought through
wilds of thought
By pilgrim foot and knee!

O beautiful for glory-tale
Of liberating strife
When once and twice,
for man's avail
Men lavished precious life!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
Till selfish gain no longer stain
The banner of the free!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
Till nobler men keep once again
Thy whiter jubilee!



GEOGRAPHY TRIVIA

Directions: Think of five trivia questions in each category.

RESOURCES FOUND

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

PEOPLE'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

LANDFORMS/BODIES OF WATER

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

CLIMATE

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Lesson 9: People and the Environment

Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

- What relationships exist between living things and their environment?
- How do population growth, movement, and technological advancements affect the environment?



Things to Know

- People change the environment in order to meet their needs.
- Transportation and communication advancements often change the geography of the land.

• Skills

- Describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States, past and present. (SS)
- Identify reasons why people have adapted to and modified their environment, past and present, such as the use of natural resources to meet basic needs. (SS)
- Analyze the consequences of human modification of the environment, past and present. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

As people settle in different regions of the U.S., they modify their environment to meet their needs. From building roads and railways to clearing land for farming and constructing cities, these changes shape how communities grow.

In this lesson, your child will explore how transportation, technology, and resource use have transformed the landscape over time. While these changes make life easier, they also impact nature and wildlife. Encourage your child to think about ways people alter their surroundings every day and how these modifications connect different regions across the country.

Activities

Activity 1: Modifying the Environment

On the "Modifying the Environment" pages, your child explores how people have changed the landscape in different regions to improve transportation, develop technology, and meet basic needs. Review his examples to be sure they accurately show how humans have modified the environment. For transportation, he might describe highways built through mountains, bridges constructed across rivers, or tunnels dug through rugged terrain. Examples of technology might include cell towers built to improve communication, dams constructed to generate electricity, or pipelines installed to transport oil and natural gas. To meet basic needs, people have developed irrigation systems to grow crops in dry regions, cleared forests to build homes and cities, and constructed levees to protect communities from flooding. Encourage your child to include specific examples from the states shown on the activity pages and explain how each modification helps people. Discuss how these changes can improve people's lives but may also affect natural habitats and ecosystems.

Activity 2: Geography Songs

If your child is not familiar with the songs, teach them to him and sing along to the videos. If he plays an instrument, encourage him to try to play the melodies of the songs.

Activity 3: Geography Song or Geography Trivia

For this activity, your child can choose either to write a song that reflects the region where he lives or to create a geography trivia game with questions related to the region. Find a time for your child to sing his song or play his trivia game with the family.

Option 1: Region Song

Encourage your child to get creative while writing a song about the region where he lives. His lyrics should highlight the landforms, climate, and natural resources that make the area unique. He might include details about towering mountains, open plains, dense forests, or winding rivers. If he's unsure about the melody, suggest using a familiar tune, like a favorite song or a simple folk tune, and changing the words to fit.

Once his song is written, have him practice and add some excitement to his performance. He can use hand gestures to emphasize key parts of the song or even add sound effects, like mimicking rushing water or strong winds. After he sings for the family, take a moment to discuss what he included and how it represents his region. If he enjoys the activity, encourage him to take it a step further—maybe record his song, add a beat, or even perform it with an instrument!

Option 2: Geography Trivia

Encourage your child to put his knowledge of his region to the test by creating an engaging trivia game. He should come up with about twenty questions covering topics such as natural resources, climate, landforms, bodies of water, and how people interact with the environment. His questions can focus on fun facts, historical events, or unique geographical features specific to his region.

Once he has written out the questions and answers on the "Geography Trivia" pages, help him set up a family game night. He can act as the game host, asking the questions and keeping track of points as family members compete to answer correctly. To make it even more fun, suggest using a buzzer or raising hands to answer, or even offering a small prize for the winner. Playing the trivia game together will reinforce what he has learned and give him the chance to teach others about the region in an interactive and exciting way!

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- How have transportation advancements changed the geography of the land? (*Transportation advancements have significantly changed the geography of the land. Roads and highways have been built, cutting through forests, mountains, and plains to connect cities and towns. Railroads were laid across the country, altering landscapes to make travel faster and more efficient. Bridges and tunnels have made it easier to travel over rivers and through mountains, while airports and runways have transformed large areas of flat land into busy transportation hubs.*)

- Why do you think many American songs reflect the geography of the land? *(Many American songs reflect the geography of the land because they help tell the story of the country's diverse landscapes. Songs like This Land Is Your Land describe the beauty and vastness of the nation, from the "golden valleys" to the "redwood forests." The lyrics remind us that the land belongs to all Americans and that its natural wonders connect people from coast to coast. Similarly, God Bless America expresses gratitude for the country's majestic landscapes, from the mountains to the prairies and the oceans. These songs show how geography plays an important role in American identity, shaping the culture, traditions, and experiences of its people.)*
- How have people in our region modified the environment? *(People in our region have modified the environment in many ways. Land has been cleared to build homes, schools, and businesses, making room for growing communities. Roads and highways have been paved to improve transportation and make travel easier. Rivers and lakes have been changed by dams to provide water and electricity to cities and towns. Farmers have transformed open land by planting crops and raising animals for food. As cities grow, natural spaces are replaced with buildings, sidewalks, and parks, shaping the environment to meet the needs of the people who live there.)*

Things to Review

Review the trivia game or song your child created, and discuss his ideas.