



# GEOGRAPHY BEE

An integrated primary unit teaching map skills

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## PURPOSE

GEOGRAPHY BEE provides an integrated approach to teaching primary students about geography while imparting basic map reading skills. Since much of the communication young children experience involves pictures and symbols, early elementary students adapt quite quickly to map reading experiences. When we help children experience maps as pictures, they learn how to gather considerable information from the world around them.

Introducing map concepts to students as soon as they begin their school careers instills an appreciation of and affinity for developing crucial geography skills, and capitalizes on their natural curiosity about maps. Students experience maps as a visual form of communication about their school and about local, regional, national and global landforms and weather. A variety of activities tap into the young child's natural interest and curiosity about maps. Specifically your students will gain the following as a result of participating in this unit:

### **Knowledge**

1. Understanding that a map is a picture representation of a real area that is much larger
2. Learning cardinal directions (north, south, east, west) and directional references (over, under, beside, right, left, etc.)
3. Realizing that maps are helpful in many real life situations

### **Skills**

1. Using and interpreting symbols on a map
2. Locating places on various kinds of maps
3. Relating the location of one place to that of another place
4. Making use of a graph to express information
5. Deciding the direction (north, south, east, west) of one area compared to another on a map

### **Feelings and Attitudes**

1. Reinforcement of a natural curiosity about maps
2. Enhanced interest in maps
3. Increased confidence in using and reading maps
4. Appreciation of the many uses of maps
  - Locating places
  - Reading weather maps
  - Learning about places introduced outside of school through the news or family
5. Recognition of the value of teamwork in reaching personal and group goals

## OVERVIEW

GEOGRAPHY BEE introduces the five main categories of geography: symbols, direction, scale, location and the globe. Students learn map skills with familiar characters such as “the little piggy who went to market,” “The Three Pigs” and “The Gingerbread Man.” All of these activities help students become more competent with map reading. In addition, GEOGRAPHY BEE integrates reading, writing, graphing, singing, moving, drawing and mathematics into the geography lessons.

Students begin GEOGRAPHY BEE by sending a letter to someone they know in their town, in their state, in a different state or in a different country. They request a picture or a postcard from the recipient of the letter for display in their classroom.

Students start their study of maps with an environment that is familiar to them—their school. They then move to maps of their neighborhood, their city, their state, the United States, North America and the world. Each GEOGRAPHY BEE lesson builds on previously learned skills and each of the skills taught in the unit is reinforced in subsequent lessons.

Students learn cardinal directions, how to estimate distance and how to read symbols while studying maps of their school. Students learn about scale and location as they study maps of their community. Students review and reinforce these concepts as they explore maps of their state, the United States, North America and the world. Students also learn about physical maps, political maps, product maps and weather maps. When they are learning about the globe, students explore the seven continents, the equator, the North and South Poles, global hemispheres and time zones.

Each day, students complete a class graph that relates to their study of geography. As they explore each map, students create a page for their individual My Book of Maps, which will reinforce their learning each time they read it.

As a culminating activity, students apply what they have learned about maps, scale and distance. Small groups decide where to hide a treasure sack, either within the classroom or elsewhere on the school grounds, then devise a clear map to lead another group of students to discover the hidden treasure.

## SETUP DIRECTIONS

- **Student Letter** This sample letter is written from the student's perspective, and requests a response from the recipient. Kindergarten and some first grade students will probably fill in the blanks and send the Student Letter that you copy for them. Second and third grade students can use the Student Letter as a model to write their own letters.

### 8. Using the Postcards and Pictures

Enlarge one copy of the POSTCARD PASSPORT and mount on the bulletin board. As the postcards or pictures arrive, enter the date and where the letter originated on the posted class POSTCARD PASSPORT. Your students decide which map they should look at to find the area shown in the picture—the map of your city, of your state, of the United States, or of North America or the world for another country.

- Once students determine the map that goes with the postcard or picture, post the picture or postcard near that map. Attach a piece of string leading from the exact location on the map to the postcard or picture. These markers will help your students pinpoint locations as they look at the different pictures around the map.
- Issue an individual 8.5" x 11" POSTCARD PASSPORT to students capable of writing the dates and places of origin of mail received in your classroom.
- If possible, add an official-looking stamp to the POSTCARD PASSPORT(S) for each postcard or picture received.
- You may include in this visual mapping activity areas of your school important to your students but not included in the mapping activities for Day 1. (For example, your school may include a nurse's office or health room.) Take a picture of that room and hold it until other pictures and postcards begin to arrive. Ask your class to identify the picture. Then ask your students which map posted in the classroom goes with this picture.

## DAILY GRAPH TITLES

**I looked at a map.**

Yes

No

**I made a map of my bedroom.**

Yes

No

**I like reading maps.**

Yes

No

**I have lived in \_\_\_\_\_ all my life.**

Yes

No

**How I get to school:**

Walk

Bus

Car

Other

**I have traveled to \_\_\_\_\_.**

Yes

No

**I have traveled to another state.**

Yes

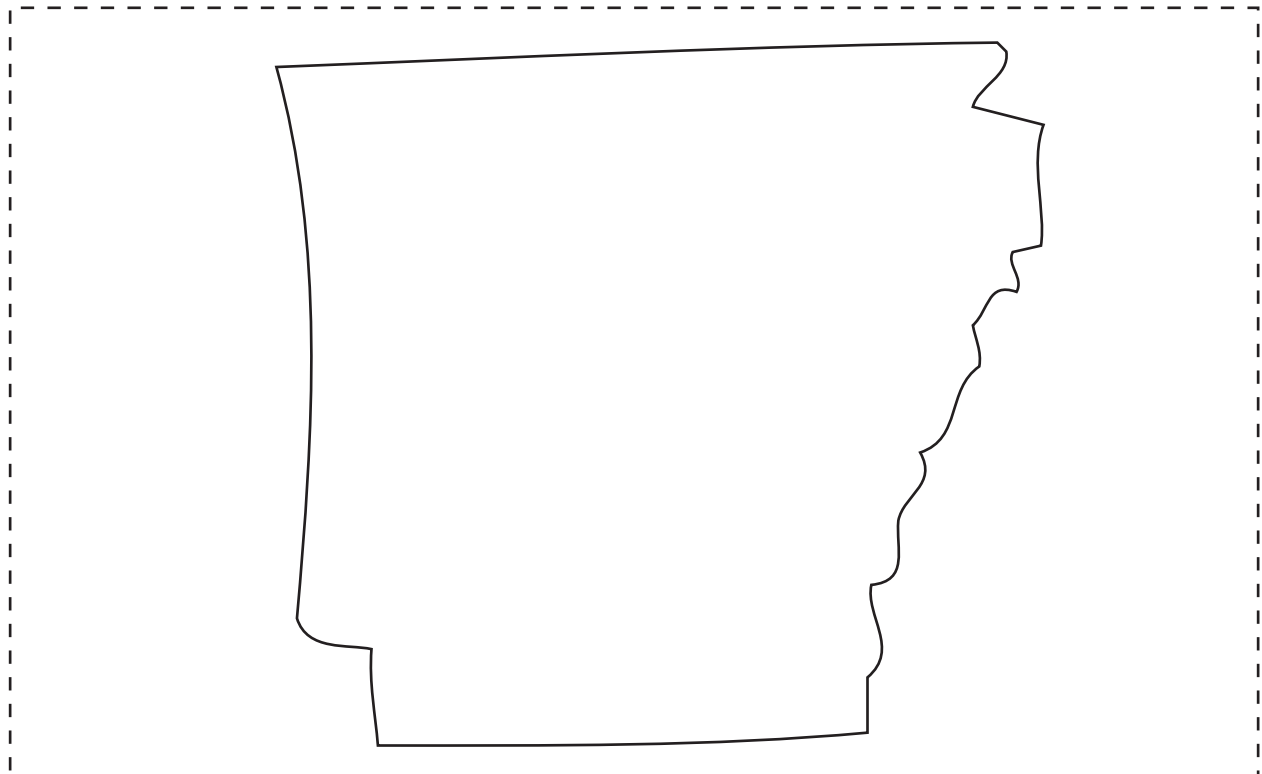
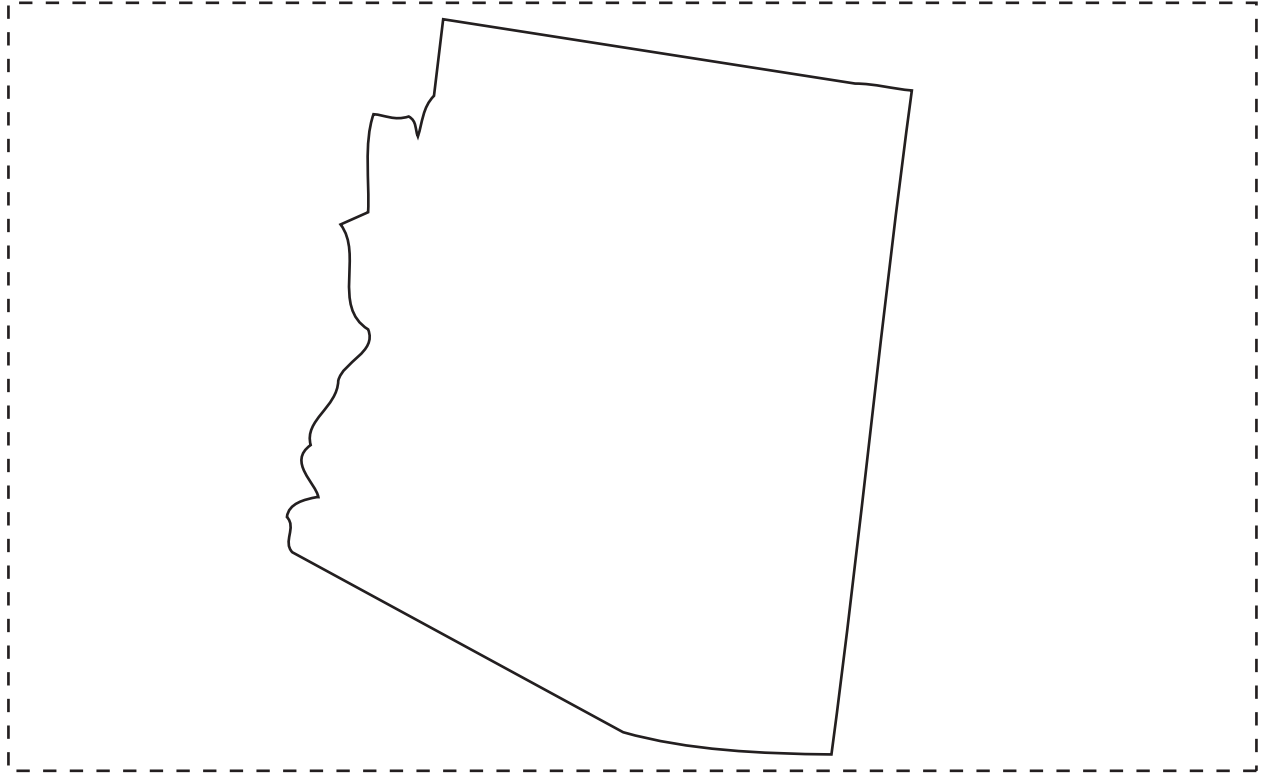
No

**My favorite \_\_\_\_\_ team:**

Other



## ARIZONA & ARKANSAS



## BEFORE DAY 1

### Materials

1. INTRODUCTORY PARENT LETTER—*class set*
2. FOLLOW-UP PARENT LETTER—*class set*
3. POSTCARD PASSPORT—*one (enlarged for the bulletin board)*
4. POSTCARD PASSPORT (8.5" x 11")\*—*as needed*
5. STUDENT LETTER—*class set*
6. Real passport—*one (optional)*

\* one per student capable of copying the places from the posted POSTCARD PASSPORT

### TEACHING TIP

*Parents with an email service may choose to send email letters rather than traditional "snail mail" letters.*

*Be sure to fill in the date you would like this letter returned before copying it for your students!*

### TEACHING TIP

*You might send out a copy of the STUDENT LETTER to someone you know in each of the categories (local, state, different state and outside of the country) requesting a picture or postcard. This will ensure that your class will get mail from each area and will provide pictures or postcards if some of your students do not receive a response to their letters.*

### TEACHING TIP

*If you have small stamps, the passport(s) will look more authentic if you put a stamp on the line before listing the location "visited."*

### Procedure

1. Prepare and send home the INTRODUCTORY PARENT LETTER.
2. After students return the responses to the INTRODUCTORY PARENT LETTER look at the responses and determine to which friend or relative each child will send the STUDENT LETTER. See Setup Directions #7, **Introducing the Unit to Students and Families** for more specific information about these letters.
3. Based on your decisions, complete the FOLLOW-UP PARENT LETTER and send it home along with the STUDENT LETTER.
4. Explain a *passport* to your class. Explain that when people travel outside of their country, they need a passport. Tell your students that a passport is an official government document. People who travel outside their country must apply for a passport and have a photograph taken. A passport certifies who a person is and the country he/she comes from. As people enter each new country, their passports are checked and stamped.
5. Draw students' attention to the POSTCARD PASSPORT posted on the bulletin board. Explain to your students that your classroom passport is a bit different from a regular passport. As each picture or postcard arrives, your class will list the date and its place of origin on the POSTCARD PASSPORT.
6. Allow time for those students with individual copies of the POSTCARD PASSPORT to copy the date and place of origin for each picture or postcard as it arrives.