

Where in the USA are we?

Strand identification: Geography, essential skills

Standard: The student will use maps, globes, geographic information systems, and other databases to answer geographic questions at a variety of scales from local to global.

Benchmarks: #1 Students will demonstrate the ability to obtain geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources.

Grade level: 9-12 (ELL, Special Education and Regular)

Overview: This lesson will provide students with various means of identifying the 50 states, their locations, and their capitals. This will include using *World* by Torpedo, repeated tracing of state and U.S. outline maps, and writing a short story using state and city maps.

Time: ongoing throughout the semester

Subjects/Topics: Geography

Required materials: blank copy paper, blank outline maps of the U.S. and the individual states, atlases, and the program *World* by Torpedo (www.torpedosoftware.com).

Suggested Procedure:

1. Form groups of 4. Ask each group to brainstorm a list of states in the U.S. and their capitals. Give them a time line of 3 minutes. Put a list together on an overhead sheet or chart paper. Did the entire class miss any? What states did all groups come up with? Do this every week until all the groups come up with every state and capital.

2. Pass out a heavy line outline map of the U. S. with the states shown (<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/>) (United States: no labels). Placing a blank piece of copy paper on the outline map have each student trace the outline of the U.S. for the beginning tracing exercise. This is a once a week activity. After 3 weeks of tracing on the fourth week ask the students to use a black piece of paper and freehand the outline of the U.S. Later add regions of states until at the end of the semester the students will be able to draw freehand the U.S. and its fifty states.

3. Purchase and download the world program by Torpedo software company. It is very inexpensive, \$50 for an entire school with unlimited licenses.

Go to the icon of the American Flag. This is a program to learn the 50 states.

There is one section that is just on the states themselves, another that is capitals. It is not simply stating that Jackson is the capital of Mississippi, the student must identify where Mississippi is on a map of the fifty states. After the students are familiar with using the program the teacher can set up speed contests to see who is the fastest on the U.S. Keep track with overheads or wall charts of the top 25% or so.

4. Helping the students to identify the absolute location of various capitals, (<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/>) (United States: capitals no labels) have the students write a short story; a murder mystery, an adventure story or a love story etc. Using an atlas students would work on their story writing skills as well as identifying state capitals with only their longitude and latitude intersections. After the students have written their stories, they would read their story to the class. The class would be writing down the capitals where the “action” took place, based on looking at the U.S. map showing minimal latitude and longitude lines (every 10-20 °). Set the number of capitals that the writers must include in their stories. Encourage the students to make the stories as interesting as possible.

Suggested Assessment:

At the end of the semester the students should be able to take a blank piece of copy paper and draw in freehand the 50 states and label their capitals.

Extension Activities: Parts of this lesson plan could be used with any area of the world, country, city or local level.

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