

- Have students find out who their local and federal senators and congress people are. Have them write letters to their representatives to find out about what it is like to be an elected representative. Alternatively, if there are any particular concerns students may have about what is going on locally or nationally, they could write letters voicing their concerns. Useful resources: [www.senate.gov/](http://www.senate.gov/) and [www.house.gov/](http://www.house.gov/)
- The United States has an extremely diverse culture. Have students research some regional foods and create a United States cookbook. Students should include recipes and illustrations of the various dishes or beverages. Useful resource: [www.whats4eats.com/4rec\\_us.html](http://www.whats4eats.com/4rec_us.html)
- Using large pieces of cardboard or poster board, have students create a large and colorful jigsaw puzzle of the United States. Students will have to first draw the outline of the country, then cut their maps apart. Have groups of students swap puzzles and put them back together.
- Have students participate in a U.S.A. scavenger hunt using the web site below. This site contains everything students will need to participate, including a hunt worksheet and all of the relevant Internet resources. [ted.coe.wayne.edu/coatt/monica/lesson\\_plans.htm](http://ted.coe.wayne.edu/coatt/monica/lesson_plans.htm)
- In small groups, have students create a United States word scramble. Assign each group several states. Have students scramble the state names. Then have groups swap and unscramble. Students can do this by themselves or with the assistance of an online scrambler. Useful resource: [search.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/scramble.pl](http://search.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/scramble.pl)
- Have students investigate the United States Mint. Students can learn about current and past currency and how money is manufactured, and participate in a variety of online activities and games at the United States Mint's excellent web site for kids. [usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=aboutUs](http://usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=aboutUs)

**Suggested Internet Resources**

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [geography.about.com](http://geography.about.com)  
This is an excellent resource for both students and teachers. It contains maps, quizzes and information about population, weather and more.
- [www.us-national-parks.net/](http://www.us-national-parks.net/)  
This excellent web site has information and pictures about each individual park in the United States.

**Suggested Print Resources**

- Kuntz, Lynn, Jan Fleming & Mark A. Hicks. *American Grub: Eats from All Fifty States*. Gibbs Smith, Layton, Utah; 2003.
- Miller, Millie & Cyndi Nelson. *United States of America: A State-by-State Guide*. Scholastic, Inc. New York, NY; 2001.
- Sayre, April Pulley. *Welcome to North America!* Millbrook Press, Brookfield, CT; 2003.
- Stein, R. Conrad. *Washington D.C.* Scholastic Library Publishing, New York, NY; 2000.



**The United States**

**Grades K-4**

Geography is the study of the Earth's surface and the ways in which people interact with it. It helps us to understand the unique features of regions, landforms, climates and natural resources. Geography is also the study of people; where they live, how they live and why and how they move from place to place. Through the study of geography we can understand the impact people have upon the environment, and the effect the environment has upon people. Geography is not about the rote memorization of capital cities or mountain ranges, but rather an understanding of why cities sprang up where they did, and how one mountain range may be different from another. Geography is a framework through which we can understand, interpret and make sense of an ever-changing world.

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

**Julia McMeans, M.Ed.  
Rudolph Lea, Educator**

Curriculum Specialists, Schlessinger Media

**COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES**

- |              |                 |                                    |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| • California | • The Midwest   | • State Capitals                   |
| • Florida    | • The Northeast | • The United States                |
| • Michigan   | • The Southeast | • U.S. Commonwealths & Territories |
| • New York   | • The Southwest |                                    |
| • Texas      | • The West      |                                    |

Teacher's Guides Included and Available Online at:

**800-843-3620**



Teacher's Guide and Program Copyright 2004 by Schlessinger Media, a division of Library Video Company  
P.O. Box 580, Wynnewood, PA 19096 • 800-843-3620  
Executive Producer: Andrew Schlessinger  
Program produced and directed by JWM Productions, LLC.  
All rights reserved.



## Program Summary

The United States of America is one of the biggest, and certainly one of the most diverse countries on the planet. It is located in the Northern Hemisphere on the continent of North America. The United States is bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by the country of Canada, and on the south by the country of Mexico.

Because the country is so large, its climate, landforms and people are quite varied. There are some places in the United States, like Alaska, where the temperature has plummeted to 80 degrees below zero, and other places, like Death Valley, in the state of California, where the temperature has soared to 130 degrees above zero. The United States has temperate, tropical, desert and Arctic climates. Both the polar bear and the crocodile inhabit this massive country.

Like the climate, America's landforms are also varied. There are coastal plains along the eastern and southeastern borders, coastal ranges along the western border, and large plains, mountains and deserts in the interior of the country.

Diversity in most things is common in the United States. Just look at the population! Thousands of Native Americans lived in North America long before the arrival of Europeans. And today, America is populated by people whose families, at one time or another, came from different countries, or who are themselves from different countries. With them they brought their culture, which is one of the things that makes America different from anywhere else.

The United States is rich in natural resources: coal, from mines in Pennsylvania and West Virginia; oil from Alaska and Texas; fertile land for farming, and an abundance of minerals.

The government of the United States is a democracy, which means that the people of the country elect the president and the other people who represent them in the local and federal government.

## Vocabulary

**hemisphere** — One half of the Earth.

**equator** — An imaginary line that divides the Earth into the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

**continent** — A large land mass on Earth. There are seven continents in all.

**bay** — A place where the ocean cuts far into the land.

**port** — A trading center along a waterway where ships can load and unload people and goods.

**erosion** — The wearing away of the Earth's surface.

**river** — A moving body of fresh water.

(Continued)

**gulf** — Part of an ocean that extends into the land. A gulf is generally larger than a bay.

**mouth** — Where one river flows into a larger body of water.

**plain** — A large area of mostly flat land.

**natural resource** — Something found in nature that people can use. Coal is an example of a natural resource.

**product** — Something that people produce to use. Maple syrup is an example of a product.

**fuel** — Something used to make energy. Gasoline is an example of fuel.

**immigrants** — People who leave one country to live in another country.

**culture** — The language, holidays, religion, clothing, food and music of a particular group of people.

**landforms** — The natural shapes that make up the Earth's surface. Deserts, mountains and plains are examples of landforms.

**intermountain region** — An area that lies between two mountain ranges.

**basin** — A low, bowl-shaped area surrounded by higher land.

**valley** — A low area of land between mountains or hills.

**plateau** — An area of mostly flat land that rises above the land surrounding it.

**region** — An area that has some characteristics in common, for instance landforms or natural resources.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Discuss with your students why they think the study of geography is important. What can we learn from studying people, the land and how the two interact?
- What questions might students have about different aspects of the United States? Have students make predictions about different areas of the country with which they may be unfamiliar.
- The United States is one of the largest countries in the world. Have students speculate about the advantages and disadvantages of living in such a large place.

## Focus Questions

1. How many states make up the United States?
2. Name at least four landforms that you would find in the United States.
3. Name the five different regions in the United States.
4. In which hemisphere is the United States located?
5. On what continent is the United States located?
6. What is the capital of the United States?
7. Is the capital of the United States a state? Explain.

(Continued)

8. What is the biggest city in the United States?

9. Name some natural resources that can be found in the United States.

10. Describe the climate in some of the regions of the United States.

## Follow-up Discussion

- Have students discuss the factors that contribute to culture. Have them identify either their own cultures or the cultures of people living in their communities.
- Have students discuss the process by which a bill becomes a law. Is there anything that students would like to see become a law?
- Have students tell which region of the United States they would most like to visit. Have them detail why they would like to visit a particular place. What sorts of things might they expect to see and do there?

## Follow-up Activities

- Have students learn the abbreviations for all fifty states. They can create some kind of a visual presentation or aid to help them learn these abbreviations. Useful resource: [www.technology.com/worksheets/soc\\_studies/states/abbrwork/](http://www.technology.com/worksheets/soc_studies/states/abbrwork/)
- In small groups, have students create rhymes or songs that help them remember some facts about various states. For instance, using the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb":  
*Texas is the Lone Star State  
Lone Star State, Lone Star State  
Texas is the Lone Star State  
Where lots of cattle live.*  
Useful resource: [www.netstate.com/states/index.html](http://www.netstate.com/states/index.html)
- In small groups, have students create a United States Alphabet Book. Assign small groups of students a state or two and have them illustrate and label something that could be found in that particular state. Individual group pages could be compiled to create a book.
- Have students research the various memorials and monuments located in Washington D.C. Students should discover details regarding who or what they were built to honor, when and how they were built, where they are located, and any other interesting facts available. Using poster board or large pieces of butcher block paper, students could create a graphic aid to display their information. Arrange posters and invite other students into your room to take a tour of the nation's capital. Useful resource: [www.nps.gov/nacc/](http://www.nps.gov/nacc/)

(Continued)