Students Helping Students

Lesson Plans

Nepal Lesson #2: *A Place Called Nepal*

> *"Imagine a panorama of green steep hills rising to rolling crests of glissading stone, then far above them soaring peaks of sheer white ice, and above these, towering over the earth and blocking off the sky, great bastions of razor sharp glacier and jagged black rock -- these are the Himalayas, the Roof of the World, and this is Nepal, the hidden, mystical kingdom of peace, beauty, and serenity."*
>
> *- Brian Tetly*
> *The Insider's Guide to Nepal*

Overview
Students learn basic geography of Nepal and begin to appreciate what it is like to live there. They study maps, and then create their own to discover how human activity is influenced by terrain and climate, and take on the role of a traveler in Nepal to understand the challenges presented by the diverse terrain.

Subjects: Social Studies
Grades: 4-10
Time Needed: One to two 50-minute class period
Materials: Collect multiple copies of world atlases from the school or public library that show maps of Nepal's climate, elevation, and population density. Have additional reference books and art materials ready for map making. Internet resources provided below.

Learning Goals

- Students will relate the geography themes of location, place, movement, region, and relationship to the geography and culture of Nepal.
- Students will understand how the physical characteristics and resources of the country influence life in Nepal.

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

- Geography, location, region
- Movement (as in people moving across a place)
- Relationship
- Himalayas, Mt. Everest/Sagarmatha, Terai Plains
- Migration
- Salt trade
- Sherpa
- Caste system
- Trekking
- Adaptation
- Landlocked
- General map skills are needed – differences between political and geographic boundaries, etc.

Additional Resources and Learning Connections

Resources for teachers

- For information on teaching fundamental geography concepts, please visit the *National Geographic Five Themes of Geography* http://www.nationalgeographic.com/resources/ngo/education/themes.html

Resources for students

- For Nepal almanac information, please see *World Almanac for Kids* http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com/explore/nations/nepal.html
- For information about Nepal, please see the *CIA World Fact Book – Nepal* http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/np.html
- For information on the physical and human geography of Nepal, please visit *Wikipedia Geography of Nepal* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Nepal
- To learn about highland salt traders, read "Pass the Salt, Please" from the *Peace Corps World Wise School Guides* http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/nepal/salt.html
- To learn about trekking in Nepal, see *National Geographic Trekking Nepal* http://www.nationalgeographic.com/nomad/nepal/intro.html
- To learn about Sherpa on Everest please see *Nova Online Adventure: Mt. Everest* http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/everest/history/sherpason.html
- For information on Mt. Everest, please see *Everest: How High is High?* http://www.thetech.org/exhibits/online/everest/howhigh/howhigh.htm
- A Teacher's Toolkit about Everest can be found here http://www.steponline.com/everest/N2Ktoolkit.asp

Instructional Procedures

1. With the students, locate Nepal on a large world wall map. Note its size, and tell students it is sometimes described as "a yam between two rocks" because of its location between India and China. Ask students what they think that might mean. Share with students: Nepal is a landlocked country 563 miles east to west, and

160 miles north to south. Compare the size to your town, city, or state by locating it on the map. Compare distances and size. Ask students to notice Nepal's borders. Ask students whether the boundaries are likely to be political or natural. What are the clues?

2. Have students study maps to answer the following questions:
   - What are the borders of Nepal?
   - What is the terrain and elevation?
   - What are the variations of climate in Nepal?
   - How many people live in Nepal, and where do they live?

   This information is available through readings and map study, using common school reference materials and the internet resources listed in **Resources for Students.** Additional information is include below for the teacher.

   Guide students so they learn the following information about Nepal:

   GEOGRAPHY: The Himalayan mountain range forms the northern border of Nepal, separating it from China. Eight of the ten highest peaks in the world are in the Himalaya range, including the highest, Sagarmatha, also known as Mt. Everest. It is 8,850 meters, or 27,887 feet high. The Bagmati River forms most of the remaining border, separating Nepal from India in the south.

   CLIMATE: Given Nepal's small size, it contains a widely diverse terrain and climate range. The southern part is the flat Terai Plain along India’s border, with a subtropical climate. The Katmandu Valley is centrally located, between the Mahabharata Range and the Himalayas, and is temperate. The northern part ranges from a temperate climate in the lower mountains to an uninhabitable alpine climate in the Himalayas.

   POPULATION: Nepal has a population of approximately 27 million people. Katmandu, the capital of Nepal and the only large city in the country, has a population of a half million. The rest of the Katmandu valley has over a million people. The majority of people in Nepal live in villages or near small market centers.

3. Help students make connections between the geography and human activity. Select from the following activities:

    a. Map Making:
    Have students use reference books including atlases to make individual climate, elevation, and population density maps of Nepal. If acetate is available, have students trace a common outline of Nepal onto these clear sheets before making the different maps so they can lay the completed maps over one another to draw conclusions about the relationship between climate, elevation, and where people live. Students may do these maps in groups, or individually.

    b. Trek Across Nepal simulation:
    Share with students: Many rural Nepali stay within several miles of their birthplace their entire lives. Tourists come from around the world to trek (walk) and climb in the famous mountains of Nepal. Some of the most famous travelers in Nepal were the salt traders from centuries ago. Today, it is the *Sherpa*, a caste of the Nepalese known for their climbing skills and endurance.

    Start a Trekking Across Nepal simulation with the students. Break students into small groups to simulate traveling across Nepal from the point of view of either a salt trader, a visiting trekker, or a Sherpa climber. Imagine the challenges people have had to face, considering the varied geography and climate changes. Have each group prepare a traveler's map of their proposed route.

    Below are related resources for the different groups:

    To learn about **highland salt traders**, have a group read "Pass the Salt, Please", the article associated with the Peace Corps World Wise School Guides: http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/nepal/salt.html

    To learn about **trekkers in Nepal**, have students explore National Geographic Trekking Nepal
    http://www.nationalgeographic.com/nomad/nepal/intro.html

    To learn about **high altitude climbers** such as the Sherpa, have students study *Nova Online Adventure: Mt. Everest*
    http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/everest/history/sherpason.html.

    As students move along their routes over the next few lessons, have them embellish their map with illustrations, notes, and so on, so it becomes an illustrated travelogue. (The Lewis and Clark journals would be a good example.) Students might draw pictures of landmarks, flora and fauna, and add captions describing what might have happened to their traveler at

points along the way.

This simulation project could take a few weeks, or a few lessons – time permitting. Teachers might even open the day's lesson with a surprising weather report (i.e. "Monsoons early this year," or report of an avalanche, rock slide, altitude sickness, and so on. This would add a dimension of challenge and problem solving to the experience, and increase student engagement.

4. When either the maps or the trek journals are complete, have students "jigsaw" into new groups to share their learning.

Suggested Extensions

- **The Science of Sport**
  Study the challenges of mountain climbing in greater detail. For example, learn how scientists test the effects of altitude on brain function and have students try the tests themselves at NOVA Online Adventure – Everest
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/everest/exposure/braintest.html

- **Interview a Trekker**
  Many people have climbed in the Himalayas, and trekked in Nepal. Ask the students if they know anyone who has been there, and arrange for a class interview. Ask about challenges, problem solving, what it feels like to be that high, etc.

These teacher resources were developed by the Learning Innovation and Technology Consortium (LITC). LITC develops educational programs and materials in support of problem solving, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.