

An Alpine Adventure with Heidi

Materials Needed:

- The book *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri (or access to an audiobook version)
- Access to the internet (for maps and videos)
- A large piece of cardboard or a shoebox for the diorama base
- Modeling clay (gray, white, green, brown) OR ingredients for salt dough (2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1 cup water)
- Small twigs, pebbles, and green craft moss
- Blue and white paint and brushes
- Small animal figurines (especially goats)
- A notebook and pencil
- **For Alpine Snack:** Slices of bread (a hearty, rustic loaf is best), slices of Swiss or Gruyère cheese, butter.

Lesson Plan Details

Subject: Integrated Language Arts, Geography, and Art

Appropriate for: Ages 8-12 (Grades 3-6)

Time Allotment: 3-4 hours (can be split over two days)

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Locate Switzerland and the Alps on a world map and identify at least two major peaks or cities.
- Explain how the mountain setting in *Heidi* impacts the story's plot and the main character's feelings.
- Design and construct a 3D model of a Swiss mountain scene inspired by the book.
- Write a short, descriptive journal entry from the perspective of a character, using sensory details related to the mountain environment.

2. Instructional Steps & Activities

Part 1: The Call of the Mountains (15 minutes)

Goal: To spark curiosity and set the scene.

1. **Listen and Watch:** Begin by watching a short, high-definition travel video of the Swiss Alps. Search for "Swiss Alps drone footage" or "Lauterbrunnen Valley." While watching, play some traditional Swiss folk music in the background (search for "alphorn music").
2. **Initial Thoughts:** Ask the student: "*What words come to mind when you see these mountains? How would it feel to wake up to that view every morning? Why do you think people love to visit places like this?*"

Part 2: Mapping Heidi's World (30 minutes)

Goal: To build a geographical context for the story.

1. **Find Switzerland:** Using an online map (like Google Maps) or a physical atlas, have the

student find Switzerland. Note the countries that border it (France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Liechtenstein).

2. **Trace the Alps:** Zoom in and trace the path of the Alps mountain range through Switzerland and its neighboring countries. Point out how landlocked and mountainous the country is.
3. **Locate Key Places:** Find the city of Frankfurt in Germany (where Heidi was taken) and then find the general region of Graubünden in Switzerland, the canton where the story of Heidi is set. Try to find famous peaks like the Matterhorn or Eiger.
4. **Map Discussion:** Ask: *"Seeing the map, how long do you think it would take to travel from the mountains to the city in the 1880s when the book was written? How does this distance make the mountain feel even more special and isolated?"*

Part 3: Life in the Alps - The Story of *Heidi* (45 minutes)

Goal: To connect the geography directly to the literature.

1. **Character and Setting Discussion:** Discuss chapters the student has read. Focus on how the setting drives the story.
 - How does Heidi feel when she is on the mountain with her grandfather and Peter? What does she see, hear, and smell? (Freedom, wind, pine trees, goat bells).
 - How does that change when she is in the city of Frankfurt? What is the environment like there? (Confined, gray, no open sky).
 - Why do you think the mountain air and goat's milk made Clara feel better? This is a core theme: the healing power of nature.
2. **Quote Hunt:** Have the student find one or two sentences in the book that beautifully describe the mountain landscape or Heidi's feelings about it.

Part 4: Creative Construction - Build Your Own Alp! (60 minutes)

Goal: To bring the setting to life through a hands-on, creative project.

1. **Create the Mountain:** Using the cardboard or shoebox lid as a base, have the student build a mountain shape with modeling clay or salt dough. Make it rugged, with peaks and valleys. If using salt dough, you can bake it according to simple online instructions or let it air dry.
2. **Paint the Landscape:** Once dry, paint the mountain. Use gray for the rock, add white paint to the peaks for snow, and blue for a small stream or lake at the base.
3. **Add Details:**
 - Press small pebbles into the clay for a rocky path.
 - Use twigs to create tiny "pine trees." A small dab of green clay or paint on the twig can make it look more realistic.
 - Glue down green craft moss for grassy meadows where the goats would graze.
 - If feeling ambitious, build a tiny hut for Grandfather out of small twigs or brown clay.
4. **Place the Characters:** Finish the scene by placing small goat figurines on the mountainside. The diorama is now a physical representation of Heidi's home.

Part 5: A Taste of Switzerland - Alpine Snack Time (20 minutes)

Goal: To engage the sense of taste and connect to the simple life in the book.

1. **Make "Grandfather's Meal":** In the book, Grandfather often eats toasted bread and cheese by the fire. Help the student recreate this simple, hearty snack.
2. **Instructions:** Lightly butter one side of each bread slice. Place the bread butter-side-down in a pan on medium heat. Top with a slice of Swiss cheese. Toast until the bread is golden and the cheese is melted and bubbly.
3. **Enjoy and Discuss:** While eating, talk about the simple, wholesome food in the book (goat's milk, cheese, bread) and how it compares to the food in the city.

3. Assessment & Reflection

Heidi's Journal (15 minutes)

Goal: To assess understanding of setting, character, and descriptive language.

1. **Writing Prompt:** Ask the student to pretend they are Heidi. They have just finished helping Peter bring the goats down the mountain for the day and are looking at their diorama. In their notebook, they should write a short journal entry (5-7 sentences) about what they see and how it makes them feel.
2. **What to Include:** Encourage the student to use sensory details from the lesson. They should mention:
 - Something they can **see** (the snowy peaks, the green meadows).
 - Something they can **hear** (the wind, the goat bells).
 - Something they can **smell** (the pine trees).
 - How the view makes them **feel** (free, happy, at peace).

4. Differentiation and Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a pre-made salt dough mountain. Use an audiobook version of *Heidi* to help with reading comprehension. Offer sentence starters for the journal entry, such as "From my spot on the mountain, I can see..."
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Research and write a short report on a real Swiss tradition, like cheese-making, yodeling, or Schwingen (Swiss wrestling). Compare a chapter of the book to the same scene in a movie adaptation of *Heidi*. Or, research the real-life animal that lives in the Alps (like the ibex or marmot) and add it to the diorama.