

World Geography: Design Your Own Country!

Materials Needed

- Large sheet of paper (or poster board) for the main map
- Colored pencils, markers, or pens
- Notebook or computer for writing the "Country Profile"
- Access to the internet for research (e.g., Google Earth, climate zone maps, articles on government types)
- Optional: Ruler for straight lines (borders, latitude/longitude lines)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you (Madison) will be able to:

- Apply key principles of physical geography (landforms, climate, resources) to a creative project.
- Analyze and explain the relationship between a country's physical environment and its human geography (culture, economy, population distribution).
- Synthesize geographic information to design a functional, fictional nation.
- Communicate complex geographic ideas through map-making and descriptive writing.

Lesson Activities

This is a project-based lesson where you become the founder of a new nation. You will make all the key decisions, but each decision must be justified using geographic principles. Think of it as a puzzle: the physical land is the first piece, and every other piece (people, cities, economy) must fit with it.

1. Introduction: The Geographic Spark (15 minutes)

Your Task: Let's start by thinking about how geography shapes real countries. Choose two very different countries you find interesting (e.g., Japan and Egypt, or Brazil and Iceland). Spend a few minutes researching and answering these questions for each:

- What is the main physical landscape like? (Mountains, desert, islands, rainforest?)
- How does this landscape affect where people live and what they do for a living? (e.g., In Egypt, nearly everyone lives along the Nile River. In Japan, fishing is a major industry.)

Discussion Prompt: Briefly share your findings. This quick exercise shows that a country is much more than just a shape on a map. Its geography is its destiny! Now, you get to create a new destiny.

2. Part 1: Building the Foundation - Physical Geography (60 minutes)

Your Task: On your large sheet of paper, you will draw the map of your new country. As you draw, you must make and record decisions about its physical features.

- **Location & Shape:** Is your country an island, landlocked, or does it have a coast? Is it large or small? Draw its basic borders. *Geographic choice:* A long coastline might lead to a trading and fishing culture, while being landlocked and mountainous might create an

isolated, self-sufficient one.

- **Landforms:** Add major physical features. Draw in mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, deserts, plains, and plateaus. Give them names! *Geographic choice: A large river is a natural place for a major city to form. Mountains can be a source of minerals but also make travel difficult.*
- **Climate:** Based on its general location (e.g., near the equator, near the poles, in a temperate zone), what is the climate like? Is it tropical, arid, polar? Does it have multiple climate zones? Lightly shade these zones on your map. *Geographic choice: The climate will determine what crops can be grown and the type of housing people will need.*
- **Natural Resources:** Where are the key resources located? Mark locations for things like fertile soil (for farming), forests (for wood), valuable minerals (like gold or iron), and sources of energy (like oil or fast-flowing rivers for hydroelectric power).

Checkpoint: At the end of this step, you should have a complete physical map of your country.

3. Part 2: Populating Your World - Human Geography (60 minutes)

Your Task: Now that you have a landscape, it's time to add the people. In your notebook or a document, create a "Country Profile" and start writing about the people who live here, always connecting your decisions back to the map you made.

- **Population & Major Cities:** Where do most people live? Mark at least three cities on your map, including a capital. Explain *why* they are located there. (e.g., "The capital city, River's Bend, is located at the fork of the Great River, making it a natural center for trade and transportation.")
- **Culture & Lifestyle:** How does the geography shape the culture? Think about food (based on what can be grown/hunted), clothing (based on climate), and traditions. (e.g., "Because our country is mountainous and forested, a popular traditional sport is competitive trail running, and houses are built from timber.")
- **Language & Demographics:** Create a name for the people and their language. Are there different ethnic groups? Perhaps one group lives in the mountains and another along the coast, each with unique traditions.

4. Part 3: Forging a Nation - Political & Economic Geography (45 minutes)

Your Task: Finalize the structure of your country's society.

- **Economy:** What are the main industries? Are you an agricultural society, an industrial powerhouse, or a tech hub? Explain how your natural resources and location influence your economy. (e.g., "Our extensive coastline and many natural harbors have made us a global leader in shipping and trade.")
- **Government:** What type of government do you have? A democracy, a monarchy, something else? How might your geography influence this? (e.g., "As a collection of isolated mountain valleys, our country is a federal republic, where each valley (or 'canton') has significant local power.")
- **A National Identity:** Design a flag for your country. The colors and symbols should represent something important about your nation's geography, history, or values. (e.g., "The green stripe represents our fertile farmlands, the blue represents the Great River, and the star represents our capital city.")

5. Conclusion: Welcome to... Your Country! (30 minutes)

Your Task: Present your country! Give a "tour" of your nation. Using your map as a visual aid, explain its most important features. Walk through your Country Profile, highlighting the most

interesting connections you discovered between your country's land and its people. Be prepared to answer questions like:

- What would be the biggest challenge for someone living in your country?
- What is the most beautiful or unique place to visit in your country?
- If your country were to trade with a neighbor, what would it export and import?

Assessment

Your project will be evaluated based on the creativity and, most importantly, the logical connections you make. The goal isn't a perfect drawing but a well-reasoned world.

- **Geographic Reasoning (40%):** How well did you connect the physical geography (map) to the human geography (profile)? Are your explanations logical?
- **Completeness (30%):** Did you include all the required elements (map with landforms/climate, profile with culture/economy/government, flag)?
- **Creativity and Detail (20%):** How much thought and imagination went into naming places, creating traditions, and designing the flag?
- **Presentation (10%):** How clearly did you present your country and explain your choices during the final tour?

Extension Activities (Optional)

- **Write a National Anthem:** Create lyrics that celebrate your country's geography, history, or people.
- **Create a Travel Brochure:** Design a pamphlet that would persuade tourists to visit your country, highlighting key attractions.
- **Map a Trade Route:** Draw a map showing a major trade route, either internal (between your cities) or external (to another continent), and list the goods being transported.