

Formation of Political Regions in Canada - Why draw the line there? Felice Atesoglu

Overview: In this lesson, students take on the role of a task force to advise the Canadian Government on the creation of more geographically meaningful political boundaries. Using a variety of modalities (cooperative learning groups, research skills, technology, consensus process, problem solving, and analytical skills), students create a new map of Canada with more meaningful political boundaries. Students accomplish this by researching geographical features of Canada including, physiographic features, population, vegetation, climate, rainfall, language, religion, and politics. Students work in small groups to create their political boundaries, based on their research, through consensus.

Geographic Question: How do physical and cultural geographical regions influence the formation of political boundaries?

Connection to the Curriculum: This lesson will connect to the Oregon Social Sciences curriculum through the understanding of spatial concepts of location, distance, direction, scale, movement, and region.

National Geography Standard:

People create regions to interpret Earth's complexity (Standard 5).
Forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface (Standard 13).

Oregon State Geography Content Standard and Grade 10 Benchmark:

Standard - Understand and use spatial concepts of geography.
Benchmark - Understand and use geographic information using a variety of scales, patterns of distribution, and arrangement.

Grade Level: 9-12 (Can be adapted for 6-8)

Objectives:

Students will work in groups to:

- research physical and cultural geography aspects of Canada to delineate the best boundaries for provincial units;

- come to consensus about where political boundaries in Canada should be drawn, based on their research;
- create a new political map of Canada showing their new provincial units;
- defend their decisions for the placement of political boundaries; and
- understand the abstract and arbitrary nature of political boundaries humans place on the Earth's physical surface.

Materials:

- Blank outline maps of Canada
- Political map of Canada
- Colored pencils
- Atlas and/or other geography reference books
- Physical maps of Oregon and other places around the world
- Internet
- Lined paper, pencils, and pens

*Blank outline maps of Canada available for free at:

<http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxcanada.htm>)

Presentation Steps:

- Tell students they have been specifically selected by the Canadian government for their expertise in physical and cultural geography. Students are to work as a task force of geographical researchers to advise the Canadian Government on the creation of more geographically meaningful political boundaries for Canada.
- Show students a variety of physical maps from their local area (a map of Oregon will work well), as well as from other more unfamiliar places (from around the world).
- Ask students to identify the political boundaries and physical geography on the physical map of Oregon. Look at Oregon's borders and discuss the natural physical boundaries. Ask the students if there is a relationship between physical or economic regions and political boundaries.
- Divide students into groups of 2 - 4 (depending on the number of students in the class). The groups will research and become experts on various geographical regions of Canada: Each group will be responsible for researching one geographical aspect - physiographic features, population, vegetation, climate, rainfall, language, religion, and political affiliation.

- Ask each group to create a map of political division (provinces) for Canada based on their particular research (e.g. the group researching physical regions would design provincial boundaries based on physical regions). Students may use the atlas, the Internet, or other reference books to find the required information.
- Bring the class back together once the maps are completed. Post all of the groups' maps around the room.
- Using a jigsaw approach, divide students into new groups making sure that there is a representative from each of the initial expert groups in each of the newly formed groups.
- Ask the students to use the different information from the group, together with the first set of maps, to arrive at a consensus for a new map of provincial divisions. They need to divide Canada into more than 1 political region, but no more than 7.
- Tell students they will need to defend why they chose to divide their maps into the configurations they choose. There are no right answers, but they need to be able to defend their decisions. They need to turn this information in as a 1-page write-up along with their maps.
- Once the maps and written piece are collected, show students an actual political map of Canada.
- Have each group discuss the similarities and differences between their map with the actual political map of Canada. Follow this with a whole class discussion.
- Ask students about the connections between their research, map-making, and political boundaries.
- Point out to the students that political boundaries are human-made features of the landscape. They are often drawn arbitrarily and may have little or no connection to the physical or cultural map. Ask which of the current province/territory boundaries of Canada support this view and why.

Assessment: Students will be responsible for turning in a geographic map that represents their research, as well as a political map and 1-page write-up. A scoring rubric will be used to assess each piece. The attached sample rubric is for a completed political map. The Oregon writing scoring rubric will be used to score the writing piece (See Oregon Department of Education High School Writing Sample Scoring Guide at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/asmt/scoring/guides/student/hswriting.pdf>)

The dialogue at the completion of the assignment will serve as a measure of how much students gained from completing the assignment.

Adaptations:

- This assignment could be done with maps from an atlas, with no student-produced map and research, if time is short. Students will still complete their own version of a political map of Canada.
- For ELL and special needs students you can research web sites that will be helpful for students to complete the necessary geography maps. Students will be responsible for a web search on a site that the teacher selects ahead of time, instead of researching on their own. You could even divide the class up, so that some are given the web sites to look at, and those that need more of a challenge (TAG students) are responsible for finding the information on their own.
- For ELL and special needs students this exercise can be done with a modified writing assignment of 1/2 page, instead of one full page.
- To modify the analysis of this assignment for ELL, special needs, or middle school students when looking at and comparing the various maps of geographical regions, the class can work together as a whole. On the overhead, make lists, as a class of all the significant geographic boundaries on each group's map. This also could be done with pieces of butcher paper posted next to each groups' map. This way the students will have reasons to work with when creating their political boundaries.
- Have students stay in their original research/map groups to form their political maps. Compare the groups' maps as a whole. Why did certain groups draw their boundaries in particular places? What are some of the differences? Similarities?

Extensions:

- Take a look at where the school district boundaries are in your area. Why do students attend a particular school? If they lived a half a mile away would they still attend the same school? Are there ways around going to a school out-of-district if they choose to?
- Compare the political boundaries of different parts of the world? Do you notice any similarities? Any differences? Are there areas of the world that look more similar than others? Why do you think this is the case?
- Pick a country and research the political boundaries that exist within that country. In the US we are divided into states. In Canada they have

Provinces. Research the political boundaries of another country. What rights do these political regions have in your particular country?

- Research the creation of the political boundaries in Africa.
- Have students create a 3D topographical map of Canada and then impose their assigned political boundaries on top. This will help them to better visualize the topography and their placement of the political boundaries.

Making A Map: **Political Regions - Canada**

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Title	Title tells the purpose/content of the map, is clearly distinguishable as the title (e.g. larger letters, underlined, etc), and is printed at the top of the map.	Title tells the purpose/content of the map and is printed at the top of the map.	Title tells the purpose/content of the map, but is not located at the top of the map.	Purpose/content of the map is not clear from the title.
Neatness of Color and Lines	All straight lines are ruler-drawn, all errors have been neatly corrected and all features are colored completely.	All straight lines are ruler-drawn, most errors have been neatly corrected and most features are colored completely.	Most straight lines are ruler-drawn, most errors have been neatly corrected and most features are colored completely.	Many lines, corrections of errors, and/or features are not neatly done.
Knowledge Gained	When shown a blank base map, the student can rapidly and accurately label at least 10 features.	When shown a blank base map, the student can rapidly and accurately label 8-9 features.	When shown a blank base map, the student can rapidly and accurately label 6-7 features.	When shown a blank base map, the student can rapidly and accurately label fewer than 6 features.
Labels - Accuracy	At least 90% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	80-89% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	79-70% of the items are labeled and located correctly.	Less than 70% of the items are labeled and located correctly.
Map Legend/Key	Legend is easy-to-find and contains a complete set of symbols, including a compass rose.	Legend contains a complete set of symbols, including a compass rose.	Legend contains an almost complete set of symbols, including a compass rose.	Legend is absent or lacks several symbols.
Labels & Features - Neatness	90-100% of the labels/features can be read easily.	89-80% of the labels/features can be read easily.	79-70% of the labels/features can be read easily.	Less than 70% of the labels/features can be read easily.