

A FOREST'S PLACE IN OREGON

Melissa Straughan

OVERVIEW: This lesson introduces students to the concept of place, emphasizing the ecological and economical importance of Oregon's forests. It further demonstrates how students in different regions have different perceptions of Oregon.

GEOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS: What differences in perceptions do Oregon students have about the role of forests in Oregon's sense of place? What effect does regional location have on these perceptions?

CONNECTION TO THE CURRICULUM: This geography lesson has a strong connection to math in the data collection and graphing portion of the exercise. The making and interpreting of graphs is a skill students are expected to possess at the third and fourth grade levels. Students are further required to cooperate with group members to produce and present these graphs, reinforcing social and speaking skills.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STANDARDS:

Geography Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.

Geography Standard 5: That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

Geography Standard 6: How culture and experience influence peoples' perceptions of places and regions.

OREGON STATE CONTENT STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS:

Geography Content Standard: Identify and analyze physical and human characteristics of places and regions, the processes that have shaped them, and their geographic significance.

Benchmark 1: Identify physical characteristics of places and compare them.

GRADE LEVEL: The lesson is designed for third and fourth grade students but is easily adaptable for older students.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will accurately collect data from other Oregon elementary schools via e-mail.
- Students will participate in a discussion regarding what place is, how people perceive place, and Oregon's dependence on forests.
- Students will interpret their written data categorizing their findings into the following sections: Human, Physical, Forestry, and Other.
- Using Microsoft Excel, students will enter their data and generate a graph showing their results.

MATERIALS:

- Oregon's Great State Survey
- Data assimilation sheets
- Computer lab accessibility

PRESENTATION STEPS:

1. Students complete an *Oregon's Great State Survey* for a beginning assessment as well as initial data for the study.
2. Students e-mail an *Oregon's Great State Survey* to students in other regions of Oregon asking the following question: "If you were describing the state of Oregon to someone who had never been here, what five things would you say about it?"
3. Students collect survey replies throughout the next several weeks.
4. Class discusses data findings and explores Oregon's place from a geographic standpoint.
5. Groups of three or four students assimilate their data on a data assimilation sheet.
6. The class assimilates group findings creating one data assimilation sheet for the whole class.
7. The class collectively makes a graph displaying all data collected. This serves as an example for student graphs as well as giving students a reference graph for all data.
8. Groups select data they wish to visually compare and create a graph.
9. Groups share their graphs, and their interpretations of those graphs with the class.
10. Graphs are displayed in the entrance to the school, posted on a school web site, and possibly published in the local newspaper.

(This lesson can take several weeks depending on your students, schedule, and the response time of participating elementary schools.)

ASSESSMENT: Students are given another *Oregon's Great State Survey* to complete. Their original responses are then compared to their post-lesson survey and passed back for further discussion.

ADAPTATIONS: Individual students may have assistance filling out their survey. Students may be given special assignments for their group work including materials person, artist, or any number of modified jobs.

EXTENSIONS: Students wanting to extend the project may create multiple graphs such as bar, picture, and pie graphs to demonstrate how information can be displayed in different ways. Students may write a brief overview of the project and its findings for the newspaper. Students may design and implement their own geographic survey.