

Mapping North America

Purpose

Students will distinguish between physical and political features on maps and globes; label a map of North America identifying countries, oceans, major rivers, the Great Lakes, and mountain ranges; and locate the United States, Indiana, and the local community.

Materials

For the teacher: large wall map of North America

For each student: copy of Black Line Master (BLM) *Map of North America*, pencil, crayons

Activity

A. Physical vs. Political

1. Show students the map of North America.
2. Ask students if they know where the United States is. Have a student volunteer point to the United States on the map.
3. Tell students that the United States is a country and that its boundaries are imaginary lines that separate it from Canada and Mexico. Point to Canada and Mexico on the map.
4. Ask students if they know where the Atlantic Ocean is. Have a volunteer point to it.
5. Ask students: "Are the boundaries of the Atlantic Ocean imaginary?"
6. Guide students to say that oceans – like lakes, rivers, and mountains – have natural boundaries.
7. Tell students that, because they are natural, oceans, lakes, rivers, and mountains are physical features on a map and that countries and states are political features.
8. Ask students: "Is Canada a physical or a political feature?"
9. Discuss students' responses.

B. North American Geography

1. Review with students the fact that North America is one of seven continents on Earth.
2. Ask students to name the countries that make up North America.
3. Using the map, guide students to learn that Mexico, Canada, and the United States are the major countries that make up North America. Point out the many smaller countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

(continued)

**connecting
across the
curriculum**



Science

Show students historical map of North America and have them compare it to their own maps. Discuss technological developments in mapping, such as satellite and computer technology, with students. Have students suggest ways in which these technologies might have made their maps more accurate than the historical one.

**EXTENDING
THE
ACTIVITY**



Have students make a three-dimensional map of North America using colored clay mounted on a sturdy piece of cardboard. Make sure students include the major mountain ranges, rivers, and lakes.

**Standards Links
3.3.2, 3.3.3**

Activity (continued)

4. Explain to students that there are several major rivers, lakes, and mountain ranges in North America.
5. Ask student volunteers to come to the map and point out a river, lake, and mountain range. Be sure that the Great Lakes, the Rockies, the Appalachians, and several major rivers are pointed out to the class.
6. Ask students if they know where your local community is on the map. Guide students to find your local community.


C. Mapmakers


1. Tell students that they are going to label and color their own map of North America.
2. Briefly review with students the physical and political features they are going to label.
3. Hand out a copy of the BLM *Map of North America* and a pencil to each student. Place crayons where they can be easily shared.
4. Read instructions aloud to students and make sure they understand how to label and match the numbers to the physical and political features on the map.
5. Tell students to color each of the countries a different color when they have finished identifying all the map features.
6. Circulate around the room as students work and encourage them to consult the large map if they need help.


Questions for Review


Basic Concepts and Processes


As students are completing their BLMs, ask them questions, such as the following:

 Where is Canada?

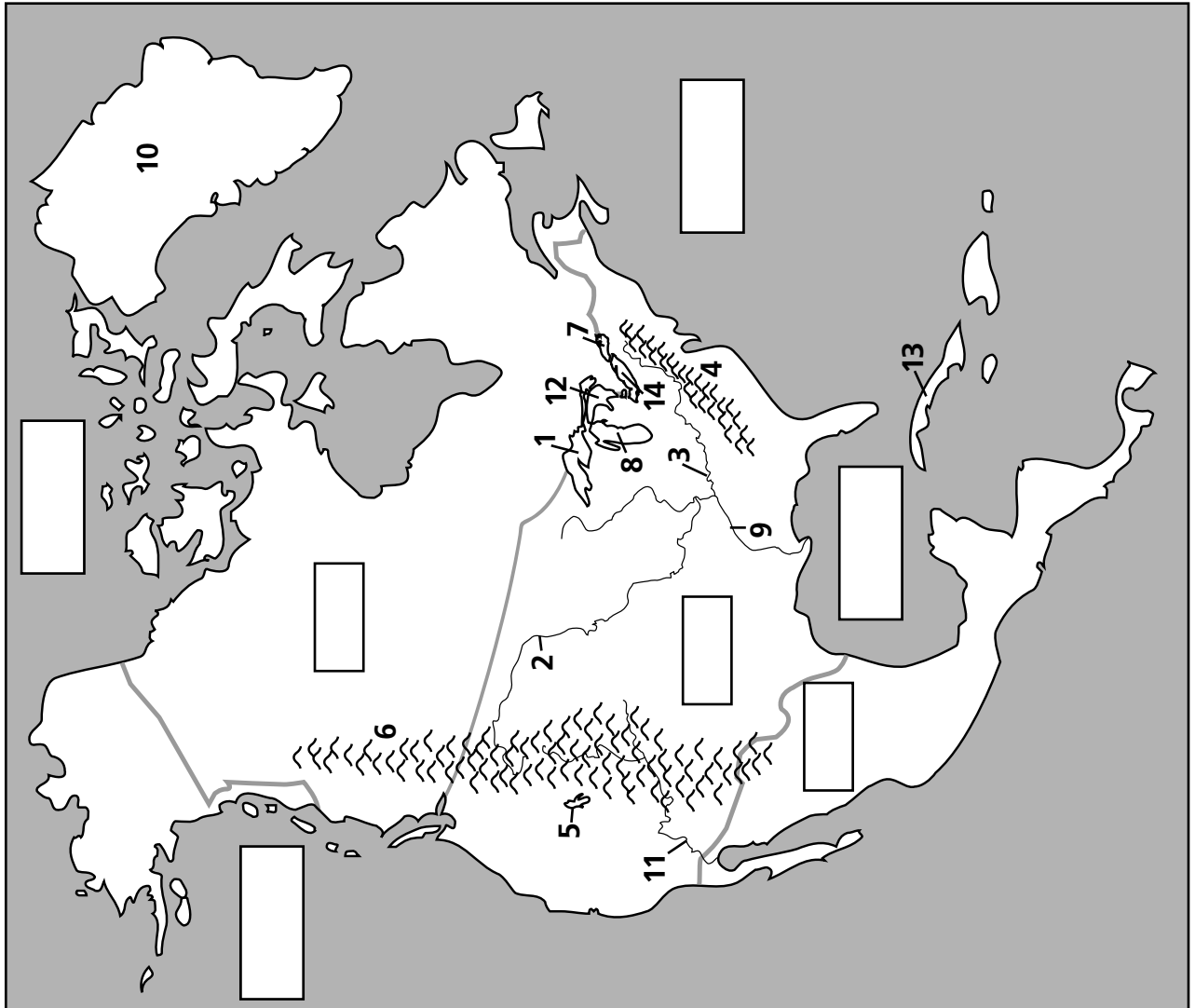
 Is the Mississippi River a physical or a political feature?

 How do you know that?

 Where is the Atlantic Ocean?

 Point to Indiana on the map.

Map of North America



Name: _____

Label Canada, the United States, and Mexico on the map.

Label the following oceans on the map:

- Pacific Ocean
- Atlantic Ocean
- Gulf of Mexico
- Arctic Ocean

Find each of the following features and write its number next to it below:

- _____ Mississippi River
- _____ Missouri River
- _____ Ohio River
- _____ Colorado River
- _____ Lake Superior
- _____ Lake Ontario
- _____ Lake Erie
- _____ Lake Michigan
- _____ Lake Huron
- _____ Great Salt Lake
- _____ Rocky Mountains
- _____ Appalachian Mountains
- _____ Greenland
- _____ Cuba

Map of North America

Teacher Directions

Tell students that they are going to label and color their own map of North America. Briefly review with students the physical and political features they are going to label.

Hand out a copy of the BLM *Map of North America* and a pencil to each student. Place crayons where they can be easily shared. Read instructions aloud to students and make sure they understand how to label and match the numbers to the physical and political features on the map. Tell students to color each of the three countries a different color when they have finished identifying all the map features.

Circulate around the room as students work and encourage them to consult the large map if they need help.

Answer Key

Students should have correctly labeled Canada, the United States, and Mexico; the Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans; the Gulf of Mexico; as well as all numbered items (below).

- 9 Mississippi River
- 2 Missouri River
- 3 Ohio River
- 11 Colorado River
- 1 Lake Superior
- 7 Lake Ontario
- 14 Lake Erie
- 8 Lake Michigan
- 12 Lake Huron
- 5 Great Salt Lake
- 6 Rocky Mountains
- 4 Appalachian Mountains
- 10 Greenland
- 13 Cuba