

## **The Southwest: People, Places, and Cultures**

### **Background:**

A major aspect of fourth grade social studies curriculum is an investigation of the five regions of the United States, including the physical geography, important historical figures and events, industries, and natural environment of each region. Prior to the unit I have designed, students have engaged in an exploration of the regions which has primarily focused on the Northeast and Southeast region. In this unit, I hope to engage students with the regions that they have not studied as much, and prepare them to work in groups to develop a “travel commercial” in a Google Slides presentation for their assigned region. This lesson constitutes a portion of the direct instruction included in my unit; in this lesson, I will guide students on an investigation of the people, places, and cultures of the Southwest Region of the United States. I have crafted this presentation on Nearpod, which is a learning platform that students have experience with and enjoy, in order to facilitate the ease of learning for them ahead of their big project.

### **Focus of the Lesson:**

In this lesson, I will show an interactive presentation that I created on Nearpod. Students will answer questions, post responses, and make choices throughout the presentation that guide their learning. I begin my presentation with a “notice and wonder” activity in order to pique student interest in the Southwest Region. Students will view some photos of the Southwest and answer an open-ended question about what they recognize from the photos and what wonderings they have about the region. Then, I will introduce each state in the region along with fun facts to get kids thinking about what it might be like to visit this region, which will be a focus of the future group project. Then, we will begin an exploration of the physical features and landmarks of the Southwest. This exploration involves a virtual field trip of the class’ choice, which will be determined by their response to a poll. After discussing our reactions to the virtual field trip, we will begin a discussion about weather and natural disasters in the Southwest, followed by a discussion about Southwest industry and natural resources. Finally, we will explore significant cultural contributions to the Southwest region by Native Americans and traditional American cowboys. Along with the several “checkpoints” throughout the Nearpod to gauge understanding, students will complete a short quiz (not for a grade) to determine how much of the presentation was absorbed. At other points in my unit, I will present similar Nearpods on other regions.

### **Learning Centered Goals:**

Students will be able to identify the states in the Southwest as well as several important bits of information about people, places, and cultures in the region, which will be checked periodically throughout the presentation.

Students will develop curiosity about the region and its people, places, and cultures, and use that curiosity to fuel research in an upcoming project.

Students will be able to discuss what makes the Southwest different from other regions we have studied.

Students will be able to share their opinions and make choices regarding their learning.

### **Practice Centered Goals**

The teacher will use frontloading of information to get students curious about the Southwest region.

The teacher will present information in a way that is accessible for all students by using a variety of texts, images, and videos.

The teacher will frequently check for understanding before moving on to a new topic.

The teacher will prepare students to engage in independent/group research about the Southwest Region of the United States.

The teacher will make the presentation fun for all students!

### **Learning Centered Inquiries**

This is the first time we have discussed the Southwest Region. Did you see evidence of students interacting with material in ways that show a strong understanding of the topic? Please note instances where this occurs.

This presentation is meant to set students up for a future research project. Did you see evidence of students developing opinions about the topic and asking questions to prompt further inquiry? Please note instances where this occurs.

### **Practice Centered Inquiries**

This lesson is an exercise in frontloading -- I'm throwing a lot of information at my students. While I don't expect them to retain everything (this lesson is just an introduction meant to pique interest), did I break down the information into manageable chunks for my students? Did I overwhelm them with too much information at once? Please note instances where either occurs.

Shortly after this lesson, I will set students up in groups to complete a research project where they develop a "tourism commercial" Google Slides presentation that demonstrates knowledge of the people, places, and cultures in the Southwest. Did I properly scaffold that kind of activity with this introduction? Please note any instances where preparation for the project occurs, and feel free to provide ideas about how to incorporate additional scaffolding before the introduction of the project.