This Land is Your Land

Time Needed: One class period

Materials:
- Student worksheets
- This Land is Your Land PowerPoint

Handouts:
- Reading (1 page; class set)
- Map activity (2 pages; class set)

Objectives: Students will be able to...
- Label major geographic features of the United States on a map
- Identify the nations that share a border with the U.S., along with U.S. border states
- Locate the U.S. capital and the capital of their home state
- Identify the five U.S. territories

Step by Step

☐ Anticipate
the lesson by asking students what images come to mind when they think of the geography of the United States. Guide students as they brainstorm. Ask them to think beyond their own community or state. Write students’ answers on the board.

☐ Distribute
a copy of the reading and map activity to each student.

☐ Read
the one page student reading with the class, pausing to discuss. Alternatively, have students read in groups or independently.

☐ Check
for understanding by asking students: Where do we live? Is it a state or a U.S. territory? Is it a part of the continental U.S.? What is the capital of our state or territory? Reinforce that U.S. territory expands beyond the 50 states. Ask students to identify examples.

☐ Locate
your state, its capital city, and your city or town with students on their map activity or using the accompanying “This Land is Your Land” PowerPoint slides.

☐ Assign
the map activity.

☐ Review
answers using the PowerPoint document, if you wish. (Customize the “Home Sweet Home” slide by copying and pasting your capital city from the final slides.)

☐ Close
by asking students to silently think of a new fact they learned and share it with a partner or in a small group.

Media Literacy Moment

Have students research the social and economic toll Puerto Rico suffered as a result of Hurricane Maria and the federal and humanitarian response. Compare the 2017 relief efforts in Texas following Hurricane Harvey to those in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria.

Discussion opportunities:
- How do the rights, responsibilities, and representation of US citizens residing in territories differ from residents of the 50 states?
- What estimates did students find regarding the storm-related death toll? What were different estimates based on and why did they vary so dramatically? Discuss the role of the media (watchdog journalism) in drawing attention to the discrepancy.
Fifty United States

Where in the world is the United States? (Can you spot it on this map? Is all of it on this map?) Most of the U.S. is part of the continent called North America. It is in the northern hemisphere of the globe, which means it lies north of the equator. The U.S. is divided into two kinds of smaller areas: states and territories. Each state and territory has its own capital city, its own government, and its own geographical features. There are fifty states. States send representatives to the U.S. Congress, and U.S. citizens who live in a state may vote in presidential elections. Can you name all fifty states?

United States Territories

In addition to the states, there are five U.S. territories that are governed by the U.S. but have not been incorporated as states. All of the territories were acquired over time from other countries. Spain gave both Puerto Rico and Guam to the U.S. after the Spanish-American War in 1898. The U.S. Virgin Islands were purchased from Denmark in 1917. American Samoa is part of a group of islands that the U.S. and Germany argued over and eventually divided up in 1899. The Northern Mariana Islands came under U.S. administration after World War II, and in the 1970s its people voted to become a U.S. territory instead of becoming independent. Each territory is governed by the U.S. federal government, and each one also has its own government with executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Residents of U.S. territories cannot vote in presidential elections.

From Sea to Shining Sea...

...and beyond! The continental United States is the 48 states that are contiguous, meaning they are touching. This part of the United States shares borders with two neighbors: Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. It stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west, and has many different kinds of terrain in between. There are major mountain ranges, vast prairies, scorching deserts, and lush woodlands. Two states, Alaska and Hawaii, are not part of the continental U.S. Alaska is much farther north, and part of it lies inside the Arctic Circle! The state of Hawaii and the five U.S. territories, on the other hand, are all tropical islands.

America’s Special Places

The United States has lots of special places! But some places have special significance to the U.S. as a nation. One is its capital—the city of Washington, located in the District of Columbia. This is where you’ll find the White House, the U.S. Capitol Building, the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as memorials to Washington, Lincoln, and many different wars. Another special place is the Statue of Liberty, located in New York Harbor outside New York City. The statue was a gift from France to the United States in the 1880s, and it has become a worldwide symbol of American hope and freedom.
**A. Water, Water Everywhere.** Label these bodies of water on the map:

1. The **Pacific Ocean** is on the west coast of the United States. Label it on the map.
2. The **Atlantic Ocean** is on the east coast of the United States. Label it on the map.
3. The **Gulf of Mexico** is south of the United States. Label it on the map.
4. The **Great Lakes** lie between the U.S. and Canada.

**B. Good Neighbors.** The U.S. shares borders with two other countries:

1. **Mexico** lies to the south, and **Canada** lies to the north. Label them on the map.
2. Find every state that borders Canada. Label each state with its name and draw lines through it like this:
   ![Map Diagram]
3. Find every state that borders Mexico. Label each state with its name and draw lines through it like this:
   ![Map Diagram]

**C. Raging Rivers.** Label America’s two longest rivers on the map:

1. **Missouri River**: Starts in Montana and flows into America’s second longest river...
2. **Mississippi River**: Starts in Minnesota and flows south, emptying into the Gulf of Mexico.

Now label these other famous rivers:

3. **Colorado River**: Starts in Colorado and flows south along the Arizona border to Mexico.
4. **Rio Grande**: Starts in Colorado and flows south to the Gulf of Mexico.
5. **Columbia River**: Starts in Canada, flows south into Washington, then west to the Pacific Ocean.
6. **Yukon River**: Starts in Canada and flows west through Alaska.
7. **Ohio River**: Starts in Pennsylvania and flows

**D. Majestic Mountains.** Draw and label these American mountains:

1. **Rocky Mountains**: Sketch a straight line from Idaho’s border with Canada to the middle of northern New Mexico. Draw *jagged* mountain peaks on both sides of this line.
2. **Appalachian Mountains**: Sketch a straight line the middle of northern Alabama to the top of Maine. Draw *rounded* mountain peaks on both sides of this line.
3. **Mt. Kilauea**: Draw a *volcano* on the south side of Hawaii’s biggest island!

**E. Our Nation’s Capital.** The president, the U.S. Congress, and the Supreme Court all work here.

1. Find where our capital should be on the map. Draw a star there.
2. Label the star with the name of our capital. (You might need to write the name out in the ocean and draw an arrow.)

**F. Home Sweet Home.** Do you know where you are? If not, you’d better find out!

1. Find your state or territory. Trace or circle its border with a decorative pattern.
2. Label the city or town where you live with a dot and its name.
3. Label your state’s capital city with a star and the city’s name.

**G. Territorial Terrain.** All of the five U.S. territories are made up of islands. But where are they? Follow the clues below to find them. Write the letter that marks each territory next to its clue.

1. **Puerto Rico**: A large island directly east of the Dominican Republic.
2. **American Samoa**: A group of islands way out in the ocean east of Australia.
3. **Northern Mariana Islands**: A curved chain of islands east of the Philippines.
4. **U.S. Virgin Islands**: Three small islands east of Puerto Rico.
5. **Guam**: A peanut-shaped island south of the Northern Mariana Islands.