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THINKING LIKE A GEOGRAPHER

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Thinking Like a Geographer is designed to make students aware of the many applications of geography in their everyday lives, as well as engage them in the thinking processes that geographers use to analyse information. Geographic literacy skills are increasingly important to our learners. Even those who will not hold the title of “geographer” will likely engage in travel in their leisure time or will need to make geographic decisions as part of their professions (e.g. where to locate their business, how to market their product to the population or how to improve transportation).

Using the process of geographic inquiry requires students to ask questions, gather and analyse data, and then act on this new geographic knowledge. By applying this process, students move beyond simply identifying states, capitals or countries and become problem-solvers for their community and world.

ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organised into seven units, each of which focuses on a different geographic theme:

- Unit 1: What Do Geographers Do?
- Unit 2: What Tools Do Geographers Use?
- Unit 3: How Do People Move?
- Unit 4: What Is a Region?
- Unit 5: Where Do People Live?
- Unit 6: How Do Geographers Learn About People?
- Unit 7: How Do Countries Connect With Each Other?

THINKING LIKE A GEOGRAPHER

Each unit begins with an introductory lesson centring on a key skill or theme of geography. The following lessons allow students to explore the content further and apply their new knowledge. In the final lesson of each unit, students use geographic skills in an age-appropriate, real-world situation, similar to the way an expert might use geography skills as part of their profession.

In the Final Project, students bring together the knowledge and skills they have gathered to act as practitioners in the discipline and apply the geographic inquiry process to an area of their choosing.

THINKING LIKE SERIES

This book is one in a series developed in conjunction with the Center for Gifted Education at William & Mary intended to develop process skills in various learning areas and enhance discipline-specific thinking and habits of mind through hands-on activities. Each book in the series focuses on a specific discipline and year level.

- In *Thinking Like a Geographer*, students in Years 2–3 develop and practise geography skills, such as reading and creating maps, graphs and charts; examine primary and secondary sources; and think spatially on a variety of scales.
- In *Thinking Like a Mathematician*, students in Year 3–4 engage in exploration activities, complete mathematical challenges and then apply what they have learned by making real-world connections.
- In *Thinking Like an Engineer*, students in Year 4–5 complete design challenges, visit with an engineer and investigate real-world problems to plan feasible engineering solutions.
- In *Thinking Like a Scientist*, students in Year 5–6 use inquiry-based investigations to explore what scientists do, engage in critical thinking, learn about scientific tools and research, and examine careers in scientific fields.

LESSON 1.1

WHAT IS A GEOGRAPHER?

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Lesson 1.1 Frayer Model
- GPS navigation system or application (e.g. Google Maps)
- Video: “What Does It Mean to Be a Geographer?” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jy9iOHD2ZN8>)

ESTIMATED TIME

25–30 minutes

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- use a Frayer model to develop a definition of what geographers do in their careers
- learn about the characteristics of individuals who work in the field of geography
- understand that geographic inquiry is a multi-step process.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Vocabulary: navigation, geographer, characteristics, example, non-example, career

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

1. Show students a navigation application, such as Google Maps, or a GPS device. Ask: *When are these kinds of applications used?* Allow several vol-

Unit 1: What Do Geographers Do?

- unteers to share examples. Students may mention needing to navigate in a new location or trying to find the fastest route to a location in busy traffic.
2. Tell students: *The study of the Earth is known as geography. The people who help create these navigation apps are known as geographers because they study the Earth and then use that information to help people and the environment.*
 3. Distribute Lesson 1.1 Frayer Model. Draw or project a version of the hand-out onto the board for all students to see.
 4. Ask student volunteers to share words describing the characteristics of people who study Earth. Possible responses might include: people who are adventurous, people who also like science, people who like to talk to other people, people who like to travel, etc. Write responses on the board so that students can follow along and complete the “Characteristics” quadrant of their Frayer models.
 5. Play the video “What Does It Mean to Be a Geographer?” on mute so that students can see (but not hear) images of geographers working. Have students work in pairs to complete the “Examples” and “Non-examples” quadrants of the Frayer model, using what they see in the video. Replay the video on a continuous loop throughout this step.
 6. Have students share their definitions of “geographer” with the class. Then, play “What Does It Mean to Be a Geographer?” with the sound on. Have students compare their responses about the characteristics and tasks of geographers to the description in the video. (*Note.* The video uses complex and learning area-specific vocabulary that might require definition or explanation, even for advanced students.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Contact a local university and invite a geography professor or student to present to your class about what they are studying or hopes to do as a career.
- Contact your state geographic alliance for resources to share with students.

ASSESSMENT OBSERVATION

Students should identify at least three things from the video as examples of tasks geographers might do as part of their work. Possible answers include: traveling to different countries, observing people and other living creatures, flying over different types of land, working with different groups of people, teaching in schools, working with maps and globes or studying the weather and climate.

LESSON 2.1

HOW DO GEOGRAPHERS USE MAPS?

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Lesson 2.1 Map Discussion Questions
- *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney (at least one teacher copy and/or enough copies for students to work in pairs)
- Video: “Me on the Map” by Brady Rymer and the Little Band That Could (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u63W7bePizM>)

ESTIMATED TIME

20–25 minutes

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- describe the characteristics of maps
- compare and contrast maps with other representations of places, such as pictures and photographs
- describe locations using several different scales.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Vocabulary: map, perspective, country, state

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

1. Read aloud *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney. The text is very simple, but the illustrations are useful in helping students develop a sense of place and perspective as shown on maps.

Unit 2: What Tools Do Geographers Use?

2. After reading the book once, distribute Lesson 2.1 Map Discussion Questions for students to complete. Guide the class through the questions. If you have extra copies of the book, distribute them to pairs of students to answer the questions together.
3. As a whole class, discuss students' answers. These questions and answers will help students understand the geographic information presented throughout the remainder of the lessons, so students should keep this handout as a reference. Key ideas that should surface from the discussion include perspective (i.e. maps show the view of an area from above) and symbols (i.e. simple shapes and symbols are used to communicate place). Students should also understand that maps that encompass larger areas may have less detail, while maps showing smaller areas can have more detail.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Have students compare pictures of their school or town to the maps of these places.
- Show students the video “Me on the Map” (see Resources and Materials).

ASSESSMENT OBSERVATION

Student responses should refer to evidence from *Me on the Map* or their own experiences. Responses related to location should refer to a variety of scales. For example, students can describe their location as being on Earth; in the country, state or town/city; in the school building; in the classroom; or at their desk.

LESSON 3.1

GEOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Lesson 3.1 Keys to Immigration
- Lesson 3.1 Rubric
- *How People Migrate* by Sarah De Capua (at least one teacher copy and/or enough copies for students to work in pairs)
- Sample word clouds; found online or created using word cloud websites, such as Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>)
- Blank paper and textas
- Student computers with internet access

ESTIMATED TIME

60–90 minutes during one or two class periods

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- engage in a reading activity about immigrants and the immigration process
- identify and explain keywords from the text
- create a word cloud indicating the importance of keywords.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Vocabulary: migration, transportation

Skills: keyboard use and typing (if students are creating word clouds using computers)

Unit 3: How Do People Move?

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

1. Activate students' prior knowledge by asking if they know anyone who currently lives in Australia but was born in another country. Tell students that today they will read about people called *immigrants*, who come to Australia from other countries.
2. Read aloud or have students read *How People Migrate*.
3. Display samples of word clouds for the class (see Resources and Materials). Explain to students that the sizes of the words are determined by importance or the number of times each word appears in a text about the topic.
4. Distribute Lesson 3.1 Keys to Immigration for students to complete in pairs. Students may need to reread or discuss the book to help them answer the questions.
5. Direct students to create a word cloud using the method of your choice (either with paper and textas or using a word cloud website). Explain that students should use the terms and the explanations on Lesson 3.1 Keys to Immigration to create their word clouds.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Contact local agencies that assist immigrants or an immigration lawyer to share their experiences with the class.
- Provide students with additional reading about specific times in history when many people migrated at once, such as the Irish or Jewish diaspora.

ASSESSMENT OBSERVATION

See Lesson 3.1 Rubric to evaluate student word clouds.