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Introduction to *Hands-On Social Studies*

**Program Introduction**

The Hands-On Social Studies program focuses on developing students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes through active inquiry, problem solving, and decision making. Throughout all activities, students are encouraged to explore, investigate, and ask questions in order to heighten their own curiosity about and understanding of the world around them.

**What Is Social Studies?**

Social studies is an interdisciplinary study that draws from such traditional disciplines as history, geography, political studies, and economics. It involves the examination of communities, both locally and globally. In essence, social studies helps students learn about the world around them.

Social studies also involves the development of concepts as well as skills of inquiry and communication. Students apply these skills to develop an understanding of their world and to enable them to make decisions and solve problems in everyday life.

**The Goals of Social Studies**

The Hands-On Social Studies program has been designed to focus on the goals of the Social Studies Curriculum as identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (2004, revised). These goals are:

1. To understand the basic concepts of social studies, history, and geography.
2. To develop the skills, strategies, and habits of mind required for effective inquiry and communication, and for the application of the basic concepts of social studies, history, and geography to a variety of learning tasks.
3. To relate and apply the knowledge acquired through social studies and the study of history and geography to the world outside the classroom.
Background Information for Teachers

Canada is divided into regions based on the physical characteristics of the land. Different sources often name the regions differently, or break the regions into sub-regions. For the purpose of introducing students to the regions, use the following: Appalachians, Hudson Bay Lowlands, Arctic Lowlands, Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Lowlands, Interior Plains, Cordillera, and Canadian Shield.

Note: Some physical maps of Canada may name the regions differently; for example, the Arctic Lowlands are sometimes referred to as the North region. If the maps and/or atlases in your classroom list terms different from those used here, discuss this issue with students. It provides them with a valuable lesson in geographical terminology.

The student information sheets in this lesson give an overview of each region, and the map identifies the location of each region. The definitions are fairly simplistic; students will be able to focus on the differences between the regions. You may want to encourage some students to research the regions in more depth as an extension activity.

Materials

- various landscape pictures of Canada (calendars or magazines are a great source for these. Be sure to include pictures from different regions of the country.)
- blank vocabulary cards (cut from tag board)
- large sheets of construction paper
- glue
- Post-it Notes
- physical map of Canada (wall map or atlases)
- information sheets titled, “Canada’s Land Regions” (included. Make a copy for each student.) (2.4.1)
- chart paper
- map titled, “Canada’s Land Regions”

Activity: Part One: The Canadian Landscape

Note: Prior to the actual lesson, establish a bulletin board or area in the room where landscape pictures can be displayed.

Display a variety of landscape pictures for the students to examine. Challenge them to find various ways to sort the pictures. Sorting rules may include:

- seasons
- water/land
- main colours
- vegetation
- physical land characteristics

Divide the class into pairs or triads. Have each group choose a landscape picture, then provide the groups with several blank vocabulary cards. Have students work in groups to brainstorm words that are inspired by the picture; for example, cold, lonely, trees, flat, forest, wild. Encourage students to include both descriptive words and feeling words. Have the groups record each word on a vocabulary card.

Now select one of the landscapes yourself. With the students, brainstorm words that describe the picture, and record these words on vocabulary cards. Use the cards to model for the students how they can arrange words to make poetry. For example:

```
prairie
windswept    cold    flat
lonely    hay bales
blue    sky    never    ending
```
Have the groups choose some of their own words to create a poem about their landscape picture. When students are happy with their poem, have them glue the words onto construction paper. Call on each group to present its poem and picture. Display the pictures and poems on the bulletin board.

Activity: Part Two:
Reading Nonfiction

Refer to the landscape pictures displayed on the bulletin board. Discuss the fact that although the pictures are all Canadian landscapes, each has very different physical characteristics. Explain that the huge size of Canada means that it includes many different types of landforms. Each landform has specific characteristics. Explain to students that they will be reading a description of each land region in Canada and making notes on the important characteristics of each region.

Review note-taking strategies. Remind students to record only key words and phrases, not to copy whole sections.

Divide the class into pairs of students. Provide each pair with “Canada’s Land Regions” information sheet (2.4.1) and activity sheet A (2.4.2). Have the groups follow the reading and note-taking instructions and complete the activity sheet. Provide sufficient working time.

Once the groups have completed this research, have groups share and discuss their findings. Record the information on chart paper and post in the classroom.

Now refer back to the landscape pictures on the bulletin boards. Provide each student with two Post-it Notes. Have each student choose two pictures and, using the information from their information sheet and activity sheet, predict which land region the pictures are from. Instruct students to write the land region on the Post-it Note and place on the picture. (Not every picture needs a Post-it Note; some pictures will be easier to identify than others. The number of Post-it Notes will illustrate this.)

Activity Sheet A
Note: This is a two-page activity sheet.

Directions to students:

Decide who will be partner A and who will be partner B. Partner A will read those sections on the information sheets (2.4.1) marked Reader A. While Partner A is reading, Partner B is the listener. Partner A reads the first section aloud, then turns over the paper. Partner B tells Partner A what he or she heard about the land region. Now Partner A and B work together to record important words or information in the note-taking section for that land region. Partner B reads the next section. Partner A tells Partner B what he or she heard and then they work together to make notes. Repeat this process until the activity sheet is completed (2.4.2).

Activity: Part Three: Identifying Land Regions on a Map

Display the physical map of Canada. Refer to the parts of a map discussed in previous lessons (e.g., compass rose, title, boundaries, legend). Discuss the legend on the physical map of Canada. Ask:

- What do the colours mean?
- What parts of the country do the different regions cover? (Use directional words.)
- Which region is the largest?
- Which region is the smallest?
- Which region is the most northern?
- Which region are we in?
Now focus on the climate in the different region. Ask:

- Which region is in Canada’s far north?
- What is the climate like in this region?
- Why is it colder up north?
- How is the climate different in each region?

Use the facts on the information sheet (2.4.1) to discuss and compare the climate in the various regions. Have students underline or highlight the appropriate sentences in each paragraph.

Provide students with activity sheet B (2.4.4). Assign each student one of the seven regions. Have each student identify that region on the map, then colour in the region on the activity sheet. Indicate what the colour means in the legend. Using the notes from activity sheet A, have students record, in sentences, what they know about their region. When students have completed their sheets, arrange the class into groups of seven, with one student from each land region in each group. Have the students in each group share their maps and research.

**Activity Sheet B**

Directions to students:

Record your land region at the top of the page. Using information from the wall map or atlas, identify and colour in your region. Record the colour and the region in the legend. Using your notes from activity sheet A, write some complete sentences about your land region. Include its location in Canada, the landforms you would find in it, waterways, climate, and any other information you have (2.4.4).

**Extension**

Have students sketch a landscape on blank paper with pencil. Provide other media such as glue and chalk, pastels, watercolours, and pencil crayons to create landscape drawings. Introduce drawing concepts such as perspective and horizon line.

Note: Perspective is a point of view – drawing accurately from a particular vantage point to give the appearance of three-dimensions. The horizon line is the edge where the sky meets the ground.

**Activity Centre**

Place landscape pictures and blank vocabulary cards in a box. Encourage students to use the pictures to create more poetry for the bulletin-board display.

**Assessment Suggestion**

Observe students as they work in pairs to take notes on Canada’s land regions. Focus specifically on their ability to listen for pertinent information and record ideas. Use the anecdotal record sheet on page 13 to record results.
Canada’s Land Regions

Reader A:

Appalachians

The Appalachian region is found on the east coast of Canada. It includes some parts of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Quebec. The land is characterized by low mountains and plains. The climate is cool and wet, with a hurricane tendency in the summer and early fall. The area was once covered with lakes, which left behind good soil for farming. Farms in this area produce potatoes, milk, apples, and maple sugar. The forests are mixed – aspen, maple, ash, spruce, pine, and hemlock all grow in the region. The forests are used for pulp and paper production and lumber. Coal and oil are found in the region. The Appalachians are home to some of Canada's best fishing.

Reader B:

Hudson Bay Lowlands

The Hudson Bay Lowlands is a small strip of land that encircles the southwest coast of Hudson Bay and the west coast of James Bay. This land is flat and marshy. Large boulders and rocks punctuate the swamps. The area has long, cold winters and short, warm summers.

Reader A:

Arctic Lowlands

This region is located north of the Arctic Circle and the tree line. Short, cool summers and long, cold winters help to maintain permafrost on the land. The southern part of this area has small hills; the northern part has mountains, glaciers, plains, and islands. Very little vegetation grows in this area. Oil, gas, lead, zinc, and silver can be found in this region.

Reader B:

Interior Plains

Parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories are in the Interior Plains. The region has short, hot summers and long, cold winters. The land has large grassy prairies, kept almost treeless by violent prairie fires. Farmers now use this land to produce grain and to raise livestock. It is the largest farming area in the world. Many fossil deposits, along with oil, natural gas, coal, potash, quartz, clay, and sulphur, have been found underground in the Interior Plains.
Reader A:
Cordillera
This mountain region is found on the west coast of Canada, west of the Interior Plains. The Cordillera covers six mountain ranges, including the Rocky Mountains. This region also has high plateaus, meadows, fjords, valleys, and glacial ice fields. The coastal area is flat. The highest parts of this region have little precipitation while the lower parts are snowy, cool, and rainy. The oldest coniferous trees in Canada are found in this region. The two main forests are the Western coastal forest and the boreal forest. The main industries are forestry, fishing, hydroelectricity, and orchards and vineyards.

Reader B:
The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Lowlands
This lowlands region is in southeastern Ontario and Quebec bordering the Great Lakes and Newfoundland. This area was shaped by glaciers. The land has plains and hills including the Niagara Escarpment, which is a steep rise of rock separating two levels of flat land. This region has the longest growing season in Canada. The summers are hot and humid with many thunderstorms. The winters are cool and snowy. The forests are mixed and include walnut, oak, sugar maple, and hemlock. The majority of Canada’s manufacturing takes place in this region. It also includes the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Reader A:
The Canadian Shield
The Canadian Shield is an area of ancient rock. This huge rock structure is the remains of mountains that were eroded by retreating glaciers. These glaciers also left thousands of hollows that have become lakes. The rock is covered by a thin layer of soil; fir and spruce trees grow here. The northern areas of the Canadian Shield have long, cold winters and short, warm summers. The weather is cool and wet. Many of the towns in this region were originally populated by people who were mining or working in forestry or hydroelectricity plants.
# Canada’s Land Regions: Note-Taking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Hudson Bay Lowlands</td>
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<td>Arctic Lowlands</td>
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Canada’s Land Regions

Legend

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Canada’s Land Regions

Land Region: ________________________________

Legend

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