

Geographically Speaking

by:

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Jose, Cathy, Kathy, and Lori are hardworking students who one day hope to travel across the 48 contiguous states and visit all the places they learned about while creating this game.

Instructional Objectives:

- The learners will be able to identify the location and capitols of each of the 48 contiguous states.
 - The learners will be able to state three facts about each of the 48 contiguous states, given a curriculum that addresses these facts.
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Learners/Context:

The learners are 5th grade students. They are involved in integrated instruction where various subjects including Math, Social Studies, English, and Science are taught in a manner that emphasizes how they relate and build on each other.

Geography is taught within the Social Studies curriculum. This curriculum covers the development of the United States with a strong emphasis on the period beginning with the age of exploration and ending just before the Civil War. Significant topics include Native American Indians, Colonization, The Revolutionary War, The War of 1812, Mexican American War, Beginnings of Slavery, Self Government, and the diverse ethnic and religious make up of the American people.

The game is designed to be a supplemental in-class exercise. Consequently, all of the questions in the game are derived directly from the 5th grade Social Studies curriculum. The prototype is limited to the 48 contiguous states, with questions written for only 8 states.

The final product should involve all 50 states and include questions from all areas of the curriculum. This will help students associate different states with historical events, people and practices. It will also make the study of Geography more interesting and relevant. It is important that the questions relate to areas that have already been studied.

Rationale:

A board game is an appropriate format for this subject for a number of reasons.

A board game with a map of the United States allows students to see where individual states fit in relation to the Nation as a whole. Furthermore, by asking relevant questions about historical events, people or practices in various states, students are given a relational context of geography in terms of history.

One of the strongest assets of this game is also one of its biggest drawbacks. The questions must be contextualized. Teachers are encouraged to continually update the questions included in the game. This is additional work for the teacher, but it is what will help the learners most.

The attention span of 5th grade students is limited. Varying the method of instruction grabs the attention of the students. Students can learn as much, or more, from a well designed game as they can from lecture. The primary benefit of this game is its reinforcement and contextualizing capabilities.

The format is competitive. A game, especially one that stimulates competition, can often provide more incentive and motivation for the students to learn than lecture alone.

Rules:

It is recommended the game be played in teams. The maximum number of teams should be 4, with 1-3 players per team. The game can be played by individuals, but teamwork will enhance the learning and competition. One additional person needs to be chosen as the moderator.

Before beginning the game, each team should choose a color and receive 20 markers in their color. The white markers are neutral and should not be issued to a team. They are kept in the moderator's bank. Roll the die, the team with the highest number goes first, with play continuing clockwise.

Moderator:

The moderator is not on any one team. This person's role is to ask all the questions in the game, verify answers, and distribute markers. The moderator will also keep time.

Object of the Game:

Capture the most states by placing your *team's marker* on the state.

There are 2 ways to capture a state:

1. Be the first team to name the state and its capitol.
2. Answer a bonus question correctly and name the state and its capitol.

To Play: The first team chooses a numbered state and tries to name the state and its capitol. If they name the state and capitol correctly it receives a *bonus question*. If they cannot, they may buy a hint from the *Hint Card* for that state.

Bonus Questions:

Teams that name the state and its capitol correctly on the first try are rewarded with a *bonus card*. The moderator draws the top card and asks the team the question on the card.

Bonus Cards

Bonus Cards contain a single question about any one of the 48 states. If a team names a particular state and its capitol without having to buy any hints, the team is awarded a bonus question. The moderator picks the card on top of the Bonus Card stack and asks the team the question on the card. The team has 90 seconds to respond to the question. If the team answers correctly by naming the state referred to in the question AND its capitol, this team has the choice of capturing that state, even if the state has been previously captured by another team, or receiving 3 markers (to buy hints) from the bank. When a state is captured from another team, the first team's marker is removed and the team who has just captured the state puts their team marker in the state.

If the bonus question is answered correctly, but the team cannot name the state or its capitol, they have the option to buy the name of the capitol and/or state for one marker each, and thus capture a second state in that turn.

Hint Cards:

The Hint Cards contain all the hints for the states. If a team is unable to name any of the uncaptured states and their respective capitols, the team selects a numbered state and spends one marker to buy a hint about that state from the moderator. The team has 90 seconds to respond to the hint. A team is only allowed three hints about one state in one turn. Each hint costs one *marker*.

Markers:

Markers are used to indicate captured states. Once a marker is used to capture a state, that marker is immediately replenished by the bank, which is controlled by the *moderator*.

Buying Hints

Markers can be used to buy hints. If a team is unable to identify a state and its capitol, that team may choose to purchase a hint. Each hint costs one marker and is purchased from the moderator. A team may buy up to three hints about one state during one turn. If the team still cannot name the state and/or capitol, they can choose to *buy the name of the state and/or capitol*.

Buying States and/or their Capitols

If, after three hints, a team is still unable to name the selected state and its capitol, the team may choose to buy the name of the state and/or capitol from the moderator. The cost for the name of the capitol is two markers. The cost for the name of the state is two markers. (A team buying both will spend four markers.)

If the team does not wish to buy the state and/or capitol, the play is passed to the team on their left. The second team is not allowed any additional hints or the opportunity to buy the state and/or capitol. If that team can name the state and its capitol, they capture the state and place one of their markers in that state. If that team is unable to name the state and its capitol, play is passed to the team to their left, under the same conditions, and so on.

Neutral Markers

If no teams are able to name the state and its capitol, it becomes a neutral state and the moderator places a white marker on that state. The neutral marker remains in that state for the remainder of the game. However, if a team receives a bonus question about a neutral state, and answers the question correctly, that team's marker goes in that state

Replenishing Markers

Since teams only start with 20 markers, and many of these may be spent buying hints or states and their capitols, teams will be able to replenish their markers through the Bonus Cards.

Materials

6-sided die

Gameboard

Hint Cards

Bonus Cards

Red, Blue, Yellow and White markers

Answer Key

Board Design



Since the game we designed in our heads was about U.S. geography, it seemed pretty obvious that the board should be a map of the United States. With very little searching, we found a [GIF on the Internet](#) that was created by a man named Ray Sterner. We emailed him for permission to use the map, and he was enthusiastic about letting us use it. He had put it on the Web in hopes it would be used for educational purposes.

We proceeded to use the U.S. Relief Map GIF to create a board design. We decided to number each of the states to correspond to the game design. From a local thrift shop, we bought a used board game for \$1, then converted that board into "Geographically Speaking."

The picture on the board was created in Photoshop, matched to the size of the board, then printed out in color at Classic Reprographics.

Card Design

There are two types of cards: Hint Cards and Bonus Cards. Each Hint Card names a state, its capitol, the corresponding number from the board, and six hints about historical people or events that occurred in that state. The Bonus Cards contain a single question about a state.

Design Process:

This game evolved from numerous discussions of contextual learning. We went through at least two other board game ideas that were rejected, in part, due to the lack of context

involved in the game. We wanted our learners to learn by doing, and to be able to discuss what was being learned in a way that enhanced the learning.

Once we decided on the game about geography, the game went through many revisions. The toughest hurdle was probably trying to involve the board in our board game. We settled it by using markers instead of points where the object of the game is to capture the most states with markers rather than earn the most points.

Another hurdle in our design process was trying to decide how players would go after states. If the goal for players is to identify states and capitols, having the player ask for a specific state by name means that the student already knows the state, so why ask them questions where the answer is the state? So we numbered all the states to let players ask for a state by number. But, at the same time, players are rewarded for identifying a state, naming it, and its capitol.

Finally, the hardest part of this project was defining the rules for the game. The rules seemed to be constantly in flux, with one or another team member throwing out an old idea and throwing in a new one. Even up to the last minute, the rules were being refined to become simpler, yet more complete.