

Grade Level/Subject: World Geography Grade 10

Objective: Using the story of Chandra the elephant bather to introduce:

- a) Physical geography of India and
- b) the necessity of equitable economic sustainability (in this case food production)

Rationale: Many students don't realize how small the world has become in regards to the exchange of many goods. Most teens are very concerned with equality or the idea of fairness and this is a great way to incorporate geography with something that is of interest to them. The purpose of this activity is to show that students can be involved in the world of trade and the world economic picture, as Chandra is a girl (for my purposes) of about 15 years of age. Also to be able to locate India and its provinces on a map.

Resources/Materials:

1. Students will receive a grain of rice.
2. Each student will need a blank map of India with regional and political boundaries drawn in.
3. Coloured pencils.
4. Chalk checkerboard.
5. Definition of words such as; economic, trade, equity, sustainability
6. Gallery walk of my pictures from India

Activities and Procedures:

The students will first walk through the gallery walk and we will discuss what pictures interest them, where in the world they think I might be, and how the people that they see in the pictures might live. Next the students will each receive a map and we again will discuss where in the world the country on the map might be located (hopefully a student will remember to use the longitude and latitude charts that have been handed out previously) and once the location has been established we will do a quick K.W.L. chart. Finally I will have a student draw a checkerboard on the chalkboard and as that is being done I will hand out the grain of rice individually. Once the rice has been handed out and the checkerboard complete I will then begin by saying that in India they have many stories (this cues the students as to behaviour – we have already established codes of conduct during story time) and when all are fully with me, I will begin the story. When the story is complete we will take a moment to absorb the story and to become fully cognizant. Then we will “strip down” the story with key questions such as: Could this story have taken place anywhere else in the world? Why? If the answer is ‘YES’ - What would be similarities/ differences in another country? If the answer is ‘NO’ – what is particular to that story that makes solely the province of India? What do perceptions have to do with how we trade/deal with one another? What are similar situations that youth today might have to speak up about? Once we have gone over a few more questions we will then look at the map and discuss the resources of India, the provinces of India and how India currently connects to the world in terms of trading, trading partners and power. Home work will be a choice between two things: 1) complete the map and list the different resources per province or 2) find another story that comes from a different province in India.

How It Went

I did this story with both of my geography classes Wednesday October 17th, one class in the morning, and one in the afternoon. Both classes overall enjoyed the story as evidenced by the homework completion the next day. My afternoon class (with a higher ranking class average) tended toward looking for more stories (of 32 students 21 chose to do option 2, 6 chose to do option 1, 2 were absent and 3 chose not to do their homework.) My morning class was more evenly divided (of 27 students 8 chose option 2, 10 chose option 1, 1 was absent and 8 chose not to do their homework).

I think the gallery walk was a good idea as the students kept referring to one picture I have (a street girl approximately 14 years old) as 'Chandra' and it helped in quickly identifying location – traditionally dressed women in sari's was apparently a give away. I would, in future, have some pictures to pass around when I am telling the story – another tactile (particularly for my rambunctious classes) acts as a calming effect I believe.

I would, in future, bring in a "real" checkerboard as it was a bit of a nuisance to manoeuvre with the chalk and the rice example. I kept erasing the lines which at 1 point became a little confusing. I would also have the students write down at least 5 of the key questions we discussed, then at a later date have the students choose 1 to polish to hand in for marks. I think a later date is important for true reflection time to percolate, if you will, the ideas that were discussed and to see if ones ideas – following reflection time – have changed at all.

In terms of time management (in both classes we were occupied right up to the bell) I would probably give out the definitions the class before. This would afford me more time to properly explain the options for homework, and to listen in for a moment or two on the students as we waited for the bell to see if they were still discussing the story, or had they moved on to a different topic. Another gauge for me in terms of impact or resonance with a class is how long after class ends will the students keep discussing whatever it is we have done in the class. Also, I think that are 'key' question time, while not exactly rushed, was a wee bit manipulated by me because I had an eye on the clock and would choose to only hear from a few students per question at a time.

The students who brought in more stories from around India were encouraged to share them to the class, and many opted to read the story that they had found. This took approximately 30 minutes from my next class – but it was well received on the whole by the rest of the students.

All in all I quite enjoyed this lesson, as I believe, so did my students and it has become a bit of an expectation that there will be a story at the beginning of each unit now. I need to brush up on my story repertoire.