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**6th Grade Geography Unit: How does Geography Affect How We Live?**

**Rationale**

 In the past when I have taught geography in my sixth grade classroom, I have always had the feeling that the geography skills my students were learning were disconnected from their own lives. My students seemed to view the learning of geography skills, terms, and concepts as simply another task they had to overcome before they could move on to the more exciting topics of Ancient Egypt or Ancient China. However, as they were studying these civilizations, they were not applying the knowledge I knew they had gained from their previous geography lessons to better understand the civilizations and how the decisions these people had to make were affected by geographical pressures.

 After stepping back and reflecting on my third year of teaching, I realized that although I was providing several opportunities to make the content interesting for students, I was not providing them with opportunities to make geography meaningful to them in their own lives. Simply put, my lessons were lacking a context. My students weren’t engaged in meaningful, significant learning experiences because the content was not put into a context in which they could understand (Chiarelott, 2006, p.4). If my students weren’t able to find a meaning or purpose for the content, it is no surprise that they were eager to move on to something more interesting and to forget about the current unit or concept.

 To solve this problem, I will be implementing an inquiry-based geography unit, using the 5-E Learning Cycle Model (Chiarelott, 2006, pp.90-91). The model provides opportunities in each phase of the lesson for students to be immersed in the content, while also allowing them to develop their own understandings and find their own meanings in relation to content. By engaging in the five phases of this model, the students are able to develop hypotheses that matter to them and to test them out to construct meaning. This model will also introduce inquiry-based learning skills, which allow students to engage in a variety of experiences that will help them develop higher level thinking skills, develop research skills , become more motivated, and develop a higher degree of reflection(Spronken-Smith, Bullard, Ray, Roberts, & Keiffer, 2008).

 Through the implementation of this instructional model, my students will not only be more engaged in learning geography, but they will be learning valuable skills, such as self-reflection and analytical skills, that will help them become better critical thinkers. Instead of merely completing worksheets that require little to no higher-level thinking, my students will engage in examining current and past civilizations in the Eastern Hemisphere to determine how their environments affect the decisions they make. Through the use of the 5-E Learning Cycle Model and inquiry-based learning, my students will be posed with problems in each lesson, which they will be responsible for solving. Through their efforts to solve these problems, my students will understand the significance of studying geography instead of viewing it as just another mundane task to complete at the beginning of the school year. They will begin to see how important a civilization’s geographical location is to the way they live their lives, while also finding that they may have other questions about the same concept that they would like to examine further. Because they will have acquired research and evaluation skills through this unit, they will be capable of taking ownership of their curiosity. The effects of this unit will have lasting repercussions in the lives of my students, providing them the tools they need to become lifelong learners.

**References**Chiarelott, L. (2006). *Curriculum in context.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Spronken-Smith, R., Bullard, J., Ray, W., Roberts, C., & Keiffer, A. (2008). Where might sand dunes be on Mars? Engaging students through inquiry-based learning in geography. *Journal Of* *Geography in Higher Education*, *32*(1), 71-86. doi:10.1080/03098260701731520

**Unit Outcomes:**

- Students will differentiate between absolute and relative location (Comprehension)

- Students will use absolute and relative location to locate specific points on a map or globe. (Application)

- Students will analyze information in atlases, maps, and globes to draw conclusions about people, environment, and economic activity (Analysis/Evaluation).

- Students will use information from atlases, maps, or globes to determine an area of focus regarding geographical themes, such as location, place, human-environment interaction, regions, and movement to develop an investigation into a self-selected topic. (Synthesis)

- Students will generate a list of questions about a geographical theme to research in terms of the theme listed above. (Synthesis)

- Students will determine the extent to which their research answers their questions, or the validity of the source (Evaluation)

- Students will create or select graphic organizers to collect data throughout the course of their investigation. (Synthesis/Application)

- Students will participate in peer sharing groups in which they present and defend their findings. (Synthesis/Evaluation)

**Pre-Assessment** Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **How Does Geography Affect How We Live?**

**My Attitudes about Geography**
Directions: Read each question. Write *agree* or *disagree* on the lines provided underneath each statement. Please provide a short reason for your answer.

1. I see a use for geography skills in my own life.

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1. Geography is something that can help me understand my own community better.

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1. I feel comfortable using a globe to find information about regions and locations.

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1. I feel comfortable using an atlas to find information about regions and locations.

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1. It is important for me to study the geography of different regions in my community, nation, and world.

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1. I feel comfortable identifying different types of maps (e.g. physical, economic, population, climate, or vegetation) and understand when I need to use each.

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1. I feel comfortable using latitude and longitude to locate places on a map.

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1. I understand the defining characteristics of regions.

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1. I feel that humans affect the environment as much as the environment affects them.

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1. When people move to an environment, they need to make changes to survive.

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**Lesson 1: How can we use maps, globes, and atlases to find information?**Instructional Time: Two 40-minute class periods.

1. **Concept or Skill to Be Learned**

Students will use varying geographic tools (e.g., atlases, globes, and maps) to develop and test hypotheses about locations and regions.

1. **Lesson Objectives**
* Students will be able to use geographic tools to gather and analyze information about various people, places, and regions.
* Students will be able to list defining characteristics of regions (e.g., landforms, climate, population, economic activity, climate, population, or cultural)
* Students will be able to use data collected from in-class activities to develop and test hypotheses about locations and regions.
1. **Ohio 6th Grade Social Studies Model Curriculum Connections**

- Geography Strand, Content Statement 3: Globes and other geographic tools can be used to gather, process, and report information about people, places, and environments. Cartographer s decide which information to include and how it is displayed.

- Geography Strand, Content Statement 5: Regions can be determined, classified, and compared using various criteria (e.g., landform, climate, population, cultural, or economic)

1. **Procedures: 5-E Learning Model**

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| **Engagement Phase****(30 minutes total)****Engagement Phase (cont.)****(30 total minutes)** | - Ask students how they know where things are in their homes and their communities. How many of them could draw a map of their room or community with little problems? Explain that these are mental maps that we have created in our heads through our own experiences with our world. (5 minutes) - Allow students to visit the National Geographic interactive museum website. They will need to enter  *Gallery 1: The world in Spatial Terms* and spend some time observing the *Mental Mapper.* While on this website, students should explore the differences in the way children and adults construct mental maps and come up with an explanation for these differences. (10 minutes)- When the allotted time for the website visit has concluded, students should close their laptops in preparation for discussion. The teacher will facilitate the discussion of the students’ findings. (5 minutes)- After discussion, the teacher will ask the students why they think maps are necessary. What information do they provide? Are there any other resources they could use to find more information about a location? Why would we study these locations? (10 minutes) |
| **Exploration Phase****(25 minutes total)** | - The teacher will ask students if they can make a mental map of regions in our community or school. How can we define a region? What characteristics can we use? Teacher will keep a running list on the SMART Board as students volunteer information. (5 minutes)- Building upon classroom discussion, the teacher will ask the students to open their laptops back up and click on the “Atlas” link at the top of the page (link also accessible on the server in Student Share folder). They will then work in their table groups to explore the different regions that can be observed in the interactive map. Students should use the graphic organizer provided to record their findings about these regions. (20 minutes) |
| **Explanation Phase****(10 minutes total)** | - After completing the Exploration phase, the teacher will ask the students to work in their table groups to reflect upon their observations about the varying regions they have explored. What can they generalize about the regions they have found? What did regions have in common? What made them different? What does it take to make a region? Can regions vary? Students will work together to determine a working definition for a region. (10 minutes) |
| **Extension Phase** **(10 minutes total)** | - When each group has come up with a working definition for a region, they will move on to the Extension phase. In this phase, the students will continue working with their table groups to test their definitions against differing examples to determine whether or not their definition is applicable to the new region, using the “Is it a Region?”worksheet. (10 minutes)  |
| **Evaluation Phase****(5 minutes total)****Evaluation Phase** **(cont.)****(5 minutes total)** | - In this phase, the students will individually determine whether or not their definition is appropriate for defining a region. -Teacher will provide the guiding prompt on the SMART Board for student self-evaluation regarding their definitions for regions. Prompt reads: “Write down your original definition for a region. Do you still believe it makes a good working definition? Why or why not? If your definition is not satisfactory, what will you do to change it?” (5 minutes for reflection)-Teacher will collect evaluations for formative assessment purposes.  |

1. **Materials and Resources**

Websites:

National Geographic. (2012). Interactive Museum: Gallery 1: The World in Spatial Terms. Retrieved from: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/hall/index.html>

National Geographic. (2012). MapMaker Interactive. Retrieved from : <http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/mapping/interactive-map?ar_a=1>

Handouts:

- Graphic Organizer for National Geographic Interactive Atlas

- Is it a Region? Worksheet

Other:

- Netbooks/Laptops- one per student

- SMART Board, projector, pens

**Graphic Organizer for National Geographic Interactive Atlas**

Directions: As you examine the Interactive Atlas, record your findings in the organizer below.

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| **Description of Region Examined**(Type of Physical/Human System, Environment and Society, etc.) | **Observations about Region** | **Possible Attributes of Region**  |
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**Is it a Region?**

Directions: Read each scenario below. Determine if the area described is a region or not. Be sure to explain your answer.

1. Two places on opposite sides of the map both have volcanoes. Are they part of the same region?

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1. One town is surrounded by rolling hills. Another is surrounded by flat farmland. Are both towns part of the same region?

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1. Two areas of Europe are known for growing wheat. Are they part of the same region?

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1. Three areas of the world all practice Judaism. Can they all be classified as being part of the same region?

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1. Five villages in different states are all along the east coast of the United States. Are they all part of the same region?

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**Lesson 2: How can the use of latitude and longitude help us find out more about a location?**Instructional Time: Two 40-minute class periods.

1. **Concept or Skill to Be Learned**

Students will use latitude and longitude to discover absolute locations of places and will use observations about latitude and longitude to make generalizations about climate and regions.

1. **Lesson Objectives**
* Students will be able to define and use absolute and relative locations.
* Students will be able to predict characteristics of regions and locations based on absolute location.
* Students will support conclusions with evidence in a group discussion.
1. **Ohio 6th Grade Social Studies Model Curriculum Connections**

Geography Strand, Content Statement 4: Latitude and Longitude can be used to identify absolute location.

1. **Procedures: 5-E Learning Model**

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| **Engagement Phase****(15 minutes total)** | - Teacher will ask students what they would look for in a dream location for a vacation. Where would these locations be? What characteristics would these locations have, based on where they are located? Students will be provided time to make a list of dream vacations and characteristics on a sheet of paper. (5 minutes)-Teacher will allow students to share their information in small groups. Students should listen to their classmates and be “critical friends”, when determining whether or not their classmates have predicted reasonable characteristics for their region. Teacher may need to go over/review constructive criticism prior to this activity. Teacher will make/record informal observations regarding student contributions to the group and understanding of effect of absolute location on a given place. (10 minutes) |
| **Exploration Phase****(15 minutes total)****Exploration Phase****(cont.)****(15 minutes total)** | \* Students will use the “Dream Vacation Graphic Organizer” to record information in this area. They will need to make a list of criteria for a dream vacation as their first step. - Students will begin looking at atlases (found in the crates at the center of their table groups) to find their dream locations, using latitude and longitude coordinates. (5 minutes)- Students will search the atlas for the physical map to locate their vacation spots and make observations about how the geography of the climate affects the location. (10 minutes) |
| **Explanation Phase****(25 minutes total)** | - Students will discuss in small groups at their tables how they determined their criteria for a dream location. Then, they will discuss what they found about their dream location. How did the absolute location of the place affect the location? Are there hazards to living in this area? Teacher will continue making observations about student contributions to group discussion. (15 minutes) - Teacher will lead a discussion about the effects of absolute location on a geographic location by asking students how a pair of latitude and longitude coordinates is similar to a street address. (Both show an exact location). Why is it important for each location to have an exact address (absolute location)? How can your street address affect your lifestyle? How can an absolute location affect a person’s lifestyle? (5 minutes)- Teacher will introduce relative location by asking students to list other ways we can find places, if we don’t know the specific address (i.e., landmarks). How can we use relative location to find places? Can a relative location also allow us to make predictions about a place? (5 minutes) |
| **Extension Phase** **(20 minutes total)** | -Students will develop a travel brochure that advertises their dream vacation location. They will need to include the latitude and longitude, the regional characteristics, why it is an ideal place to vacation, and any other area of their choosing. (10-20 minutes in class, will be completed for homework over the course of two days.) |
| **Evaluation Phase(5-10 minutes total)** | Students will complete a self-evaluation that reflects on their knowledge about the location they chose to explore. (5-10 minutes at the end of last class) |

1. **Materials and Resources**

Handouts:

 - Dream Vacation Graphic Organizer

 - Self-Evaluation Sheet

Resources:

- Atlases that contain physical and political maps, absolute locations.

**Dream Vacation Graphic Organizer**

Climate

Latitude and Longitude

Other Information

Regional Features

**Self-Evaluation Sheet Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Directions: Answer the questions below to show Mrs. Suever what you have learned in this lesson.

1. What was the hardest part of this lesson? Explain why it was hard.

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1. What was the easiest? Explain why this was easy.

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1. After your research, is your “dream vacation” still a place you would like to visit? Explain.

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1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the LEAST confident and 5 being the MOST confident, how to do you feel about using latitude and longitude to find locations? Please explain your choice.

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1. Tell me how you might use a place’s absolute location to predict a climate for that location. Are there any other factors you would look for in predicting a region’s climate?

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1. In your own words, tell me what a region is.

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**Lesson 3: How does the geography of a location affect the people who live there?**Instructional Time: Four 40-minute class periods

1. **Concept or Skill to Be Learned**

Students will apply knowledge about location, regions, and geographic tools to develop an opinion about how the environment of a location affects the people who live there and how the people who live in that location affect their environment.

1. **Lesson Objectives**
* Students will analyze news articles about natural disasters to determine the potential cause(s) and effect(s) of the disasters.
* Students will evaluate the relationship between people and their environments to determine if they are healthy or harmful.
* Students will evaluate reasons for human dependency on the environment.
* Students will propose alternative solutions for people, cities, or civilizations that are dependent on their environments.
* Students will
1. **Ohio 6th Grade Social Studies Model Curriculum Connections**

- Geography Strand, Content Statement 6: Variations among physical environments within the Eastern Hemisphere influence human activities. Human activities also alter the physical environment.

1. **Procedures: 5-E Learning Model**

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| **Engagement Phase****(20 minutes total)** | - Students will read article about Hurricane Irene silently. (5 minutes)- After reading, teacher will ask students whether or not a similar natural disaster could have taken place in their “dream vacation” location from the previous lesson. Why/Why not? (5 minutes)- Teacher will ask students which regions have a higher probability of certain natural disasters (i.e., hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc.). Is there really a safe place to live or vacation? What problems do people who live in these areas face? How have they had to modify their environments to make these spaces safer and more livable? What effect does this have on the environment? (10 minutes) |
| **Exploration Phase(At least 60 minutes)****Exploration Phase** **(cont.)****(At least 60 minutes)**  | - Students will choose a location, generate a question related to that region and the people who live there, make a list of items they would like to research about their question. (5 minutes, more allowed if needed)- Students will develop a graphic organizer to organize their information as they find it. (Teacher may need to provide assistance as needed) (10-15 minutes, more allowed if needed)- Students will spend the rest of the time researching and gathering data using netbooks/laptops. (up to additional 40 minutes) |
| **Explanation Phase****(35 minutes total)** | - As students wrap up research, they will meet in small groups to discuss their strategies and findings. They should discuss what they did to find information and whether or not it was helpful. Students may also discuss/suggest other strategies that may be more helpful for their peers. (10-15 minutes)-After sharing strategies, students will share information they found about their locations. The students will work together on chart paper to come up with changes to the environment that they had in common and those that were different, recording their answers on chart paper. Chart paper will be posted around the room when done. (15 minutes)- Teacher will facilitate a whole class discussion about changes people made to the environment. Were these changes necessary? Did they have any negative effects? (5 minutes)\*During these sharing times, teacher will make informal observations about student contributions.  |
| **Extension Phase** **(65 minutes total)** | - Teacher will ask students to think of other ways these problems could have been solved, especially if damage was done to the natural environment. Students will be given time to generate a short list of ideas on their own. (5 minutes)-Teacher will ask students to work in their collaborative groups to present their solutions and evaluate their solutions. As a group, they will work together to come up with the best solution they can for the problem in one location and work together on a proposal to present to the other groups. Further research may be conducted. Work time and collaboration time will be provided during this phase. (60 minutes)  |
| **Evaluation Phase****(20 minutes total)** | - When group projects have been completed, the students will share their proposals with the other groups. Students within these remaining groups will evaluate their peers’ proposals for the likelihood of this plan being implemented, strength of research, and clarity of proposal. (20 minutes) |

1. **Materials and Resources**

Handouts:

 - Hurricane Irene Article
 Levit, J. (2011). *In the wake of Irene*. Retrieved from: <http://www.timeforkids.com/news/wake-irene/12231>

 - Proposal Evaluation sheet

Other Resources:

 - Chart paper and markers (one for each table group)

 - Netbooks/Laptops (One per student)

**Proposal Evaluation Sheet Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Directions: As your classmates propose their solutions to issues that surrounded their region of study, please complete this evaluation sheet. Your scores will be averaged with the rest of the class’s scores to show the group how they have done. Individual scores will NOT be shown to your classmates. Be a critical friend!

1. What is the likelihood that this group’s proposal could be implemented by the region they have researched?

Not Likely Likely Very Likely

1. What are the chances that the problem could be solved by this group’s proposal?

Not Likely Likely Very Likely

1. Are there any negative effects that this group didn’t consider?

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1. Do you have any questions for this group?

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1. Do you have any suggestions to make this group’s proposal better?

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**Pre-Assessment** Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **How Does Geography Affect How We Live?**

**My Attitudes about Geography**
Directions: Read each question. Write *agree* or *disagree* on the lines provided underneath each statement. Please provide a short reason for your answer.

1. I see a use for geography skills in my own life.

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1. Geography is something that can help me understand my own community better.

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1. I feel comfortable using a globe to find information about regions and locations.

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1. I feel comfortable using an atlas to find information about regions and locations.

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1. It is important for me to study the geography of different regions in my community, nation, and world.

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1. I feel comfortable identifying different types of maps (e.g. physical, economic, population, climate, or vegetation) and understand when I need to use each.

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1. I feel comfortable using latitude and longitude to locate places on a map.

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1. I understand the defining characteristics of regions.

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1. I feel that humans affect the environment as much as the environment affects them.

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1. When people move to an environment, they need to make changes to survive.

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**Show what you’ve learned!**Directions: For each question below, use the knowledge you have gained throughout this unit to develop an answer on the lines provided.

1. Describe the difference between absolute and relative location.

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1. For each location listed, write the name of the city. Use the map of Europe on pages 70-71 in your atlas.
2. 39°N, 9°W \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. 60°N, 30°E \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. 41°N, 15°E \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. For each city listed below, give the absolute location. Use the map of Europe on pages 70-71 in your atlas.
6. Paris, France\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Rome, Italy\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Moscow, Russia\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Using the Physical Map of Europe on pages 68-69 in your atlas, how many regions do you observe in Northern Europe? Please list these regions and explain why you decided to classify these areas as regions.

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1. Based on what you have observed in these maps, do you think the geography of Europe promotes or limits the movement of people and products across the continent? Please explain your answer.

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1. If you lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, what changes might you make to your own lifestyle to adapt to the region in which you lived? What changes might you make to your environment?

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Nystrom. (2006). *The NYSTROM World Atlas.* Indianapolis, IN: NYSTROM Herff Jones Education Division.