
World Olympics

Preparing Students for a
Multicultural and Multireligious World

A CURRICULUM DEVELOPED BY TANENBAUM FOR GRADES K-8



*Imagine... a more peaceful world that respects difference.
We are committed to making that vision a reality.*

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Researching Countries for the Final Olympics

Unit 2, Lesson 4

Objectives: Students will learn about the history and culture of a particular country, and they will also develop skills in doing basic research.

Overview: At the students' final Olympic Games, each group will represent a country. In this activity, students research the country they will represent and create an interactive display on the country. This activity takes several sessions to do fully.

Skills: Research; Geography; Perspective Taking; Presenting Information

Grades: K-6

Materials:

- World Map
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Country Worksheet (included)
- Construction Paper
- Scissors, Glue
- Instructions for making Passports (included)
- Instructions for making Passport Stamps (included)

Preparation:

Throughout this lesson, have books, pictures and other materials about the country that the class is researching on hand. Read books, show films, listen to music, learn songs, and discuss everyday life in the chosen country with the children. Also help students locate websites with information about the country.

PROCEDURE

Introduction: Take out a globe or a map. Ask students: *Have you ever visited any other countries? What are some countries you have read about or seen on television or in magazines? Do you know someone who has lived in a different country?* Ask students about different countries around the world that they are familiar with, i.e., where these countries are located, what language(s) are spoken by the people, what religions people practice, etc. As the students share, ask them to try to find the places they mention on the world map or class globe.

Part I – Choosing a Country to Research

Step One: Explain to students that they will be researching a country to represent at their final Olympic Games. We recommend that the country the students study be a country that some of your students, their families or people in your local community are from.

If you have access to the internet, with older students we recommend that you help students do some research on the ethnic makeup of your neighborhood. Some websites include:

http://www.mla.org/map_data (shows the languages spoken in a zip code)

<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> (basic data from the Census 2010 by zip code)

<http://www.uspirg.org/> (visit your state's chapter for information on your area)

You can also have students check the local public library in your area.

However, in conjunction with using these websites it may be helpful for your class to do more in-depth research on your particular neighborhood community. Remember to look at the diversity within a particular group as well between groups in your research. For example, people of African heritage from New York City, from the Southern United States, from the Caribbean, from Africa, from Central America, from South America, and from Europe all have very particular historical and individual experiences that may not be captured in some of the websites above that mostly look at broad racial or socioeconomic questions.

Together, choose a country that the class will study.

Step Two: On a large piece of chart paper write "What We Know About [the country we are studying]" on the top. Have the children list everything they already know about the country they are studying. **Make sure to immediately refute any stereotypes that students may discuss about the country.**

Step Three: Create a similar chart called "What We Want to Know." Ask the children what kinds of things they would like to learn about their country. This could include what people in their country wear everyday and for special occasions, eat, what religion they practice, main types of work, what the country is like physically (climate, topography), music, culture and more! Record the children's answers on the chart.

Part II – Avoiding Stereotypes

Step One: Ask students to look at four pictures (next page) and ask: Which of these pictures is a picture of Africa?

After all students have shared their guesses, reveal the answer - all four are pictures of Africa.

Step Two: Help students understand that Africa is made up of many different countries and cultures, and each picture they see only shows a small piece of a very large and extremely diverse continent. **Stress that when students study a country or a culture, they are studying what some people may do or feel, but not everyone.** A brief overview of the diversity of Africa follows below:

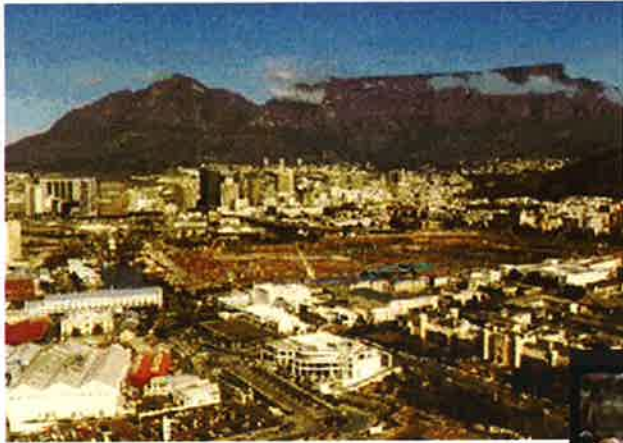
Africa is the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent, after Asia. It has over 60 countries and territories in all. Africa occupies 20% of the land on earth and has over one-eighth of the world's population. It is widely considered to be the place where humans originated.

There are known to be in excess of 1,500 distinct languages in Africa. The continent straddles the equator and encompasses numerous climate areas; it is the only continent to stretch from the northern temperate to southern temperate zones.

There are many religions in Africa, with Islam and Christianity being the most widespread. A significant number of people follow many different indigenous religions. A small number of Africans are Hindu, or have beliefs from the Judaic tradition.¹

Step Three: Ask students: *Are our stereotypes about Africa true?* Remind students that stereotypes are generalizations about people or places, and that they are not true in many cases.

1 Information from: <http://www.britannica.com/place/Africa>



Part III – Researching the Chosen Country

Help students do background research on the country (including languages, ethnic groups, religions, major regions of the country, traditions about food and family). This research will take several sessions. **Make sure to help students find information that counters any stereotypes that students may have discussed under the “What We Know” or “What We Want to Know.”** Help students recognize and be aware of stereotypes as they encounter them. For starters, when words like *all*, *always*, *never* are used, we are in the presence of a stereotype.

Ask students where they think they can find reliable information that is not stereotypical? One important thing for students to do is to consult multiple reliable sources.

You can take students to the library or have them research the country on the internet.

Research can take many forms. Invite several parents and caregivers or community members who are from that country and invite them to speak to your class about life in that country from a *personal* standpoint. Having many guests gives students a range of perspectives on the country and allows them to learn about the internal diversity of a country as well. This also helps students who are from that country avoid being on the spot as “experts” all the time.

A worksheet is included on the next page to help students develop their projects. Encourage them to be creative!

What I Learned about the Country

Name:

Country Chosen:

Finish the following sentences.

1. The country we studied was:

2. One thing that's great about being from there is that:

3. There, many people eat:

4. On special occasions, people eat:

5. Also, on special occasions people wear:

6. For regular clothes, people wear:

7. The languages people speak include:

8. Some of the religions people practice are:

9. Some of the major holidays in the country and why they are celebrated are:

10. Some things that people do with their families there are:

11. It was interesting to learn that:

12. I also learned that:

Part IV – Creating an Interactive Presentation

Step One: Have students form groups of 3-4. Explain that to enhance learning, students will create interactive displays using all different ways of learning - visual, auditory (hearing), hands-on. For example, a visual poster about the country can be combined with food from the country. A game from that country can be combined with music, etc.

Have students brainstorm ideas about what they learned about the country and create their displays in groups. Younger students may require a great deal of guidance on this project.

Step Two: To make this activity more concrete and fun for students, create “passports” using the template that follows on the next page (see below for instructions).

Step Three: The presentations should take several days. On each day, one group gets a chance to present on their country. Have each group of students set up posters, games and other aspects of their presentation at different “stations” around the room. The other groups will “visit” that country and walk through the exhibits.

Step Four: At the end of their trip, the “visitors” will fill out their passport sheets about the country they just visited and get their passport “stamped.” Invite parents and caregivers, teachers and other visitors to view the displays as well!

Directions for Creating a Passport

Print the two pages on separate sheets of paper (one set of the two pages per passport). Fold the first page over so “1” and “2” are back to back and “8” and “7” are back to back. Fold the second page so “3” and “4” are back to back and “6” and “5” are back to back. Put the second page (with numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6) inside the first page, then fold in half again (between the two boxes) to create a booklet. The pages will be in order, numbers 1-8. Staple on the left hand side to secure.

If possible, bring in a real passport or a picture of one to show students.

Now have students create a “passport stamp” for the country they are studying. On the day of their country display, they will stamp the passports of “visitors.” Instructions for creating passport stamps follow.



1. What I would like to know more about:

2. How I can find out more:

8

Name:

Age:

Date of Birth:

Place Passport was Issued:

2

What I Learned About the Country

1.

2.

3.

7

(Picture)

3

(Stamp)

Date:

Country Visited:

6

Country Visited: 4

Date:

(Stamp)

What I Learned About the Country 5

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Designing A Passport Stamp

During the students' research display, every country studied will have its own stamp. This stamp will be placed in a student's passport when s/he learns about the country.

Making Stamps

1) You will need a potato that is cut in half, a plastic knife and a container filled with paint. Place newspaper or towels over your work space.

2) Use the white side of the potato. Carve the design that you would like for the stamp using the plastic knife. The areas that are high will be the areas that show up and the areas that are low will stay white when you dip the potato in paint for stamping.

3) Test the stamp. Open the container of paint and place it on the table. Dip the potato, carved side down into the container of paint. Press the potato, paint side down, onto a piece of white paper. Try not to move your hand. Now lift the potato off the paper. Your stamp should be on the paper.

4) Clean the potato off by washing it in the sink. Add lemon juice and store the potato stamp in a plastic bag until the day of your country display.

Note: Use a sponge instead of a potato if a lot of time will elapse between the creation of the stamp and the day of the fair. A sponge can be preserved much more easily than a potato. Or, use sticky labels that students can design by hand.