Middle America

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Lesson Overview: Students will classify regions of the Western Hemisphere at different scales with an emphasis on Middle America

Essential Questions:
- How can we divide the Western Hemisphere into natural, cultural, and political regions?
- What countries and regions make up Middle America?

Objectives: The student will be able to:
- Describe Middle America with respect to natural and cultural regions of the Western Hemisphere.
- Describe the characteristics of different regions.
- Identify the countries in the major sub-regions of Middle America.
- Explain what a nested hierarchy is.

Subject/Grade Level: World Geography, Grade 6

Duration: 1 class period

Student Materials: Student worksheets (Western Hemisphere Graphic Organizer, Geographic Regions of the Western Hemisphere); laminated maps of the Western Hemisphere

Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations
- 6 – G1.1.1 Describe how geographers use mapping to represent places and natural and human phenomena in the world.
- 6 – G1.3.2 Explain the locations and distributions of physical and human characteristics of Earth by using knowledge of spatial patterns.
- 6 – G2.2.1 Describe the human characteristics of the region under study (including languages, religion, economic system, governmental system, cultural traditions).

National Geography Standards:
- Standard 2: How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
- Standard 5: That people create regions to interpret Earth’s complexity.
- Standard 10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics.

Teacher Materials: Answer Key

Middle America PowerPoint
Middle America

Procedures:

1. **Introduction**: What are the continents which comprise the bulk of the land mass of the Western Hemisphere (*North America, South America, and Antarctica*).

2. **Map activity**: Draw the border between North America and South America (*between Columbia and Panama*). *(Slide 4)* This is a human or cultural border placed at the border between Panama and Columbia. But like so many lines drawn by people, it approximated a natural reality. Continents are the world’s largest land masses, typically separated primarily by large bodies of salt water. The southern border of Panama is close to the geologic plate boundary between the South American Plate and other plates, and is the narrowest connection point between two large land masses.

Draw an approximate division of the Western Hemisphere into two culture regions, often called Anglo-America (primarily English speaking) and Latin America (primarily Spanish speaking). Besides being primarily English speaking, what are other characteristics of Anglo-America? *(More protestant, more highly economically developed, more stable democracies, distinct ethic minorities)* What are some other characteristics of Latin America? *(More catholic, less economically developed, but developing rapidly, largely democratic, but only recently, with much more blending of race and ethnicity)* There are many different boundaries which could be drawn, but you must be able to explain why you drew the boundary where you did.

Review maps (samples attached.)

1. Does this boundary match the political boundary between Mexico and the US? *(That choice, is easy, clear, and has an important real world impact.)* Did you draw the cultural boundary north of the political boundary (reflecting the large Hispanic population in southern Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California) or South of the border, (reflecting the strong economic influence of the US in northern Mexico)? *(Slide 5)* Did you consider the Cuban population in Southern Florida? Are all of the Caribbean Islands in Latin America?

2. The region of Middle America is between the two borders you have drawn. Complete the following sentence, using two of the following four terms: North America, South America, Anglo-America, Latin America.

   Middle America is a region in both _________ and _________. *(Slide 6)*

3. **Guided Practice**: As each region is mentioned, underline the term on a map, and put it on the diagram using student worksheet Geographic Regions of the Western Hemisphere. *(Slides 7-8)*

   1. **Western Hemisphere** (divided into Latin America and Anglo America)
   2. **Anglo America** (including the US and Canada)
   3. **Latin America** (divided into South America and Middle America)
   4. **Middle America**
Middle America is often divided into three major regions: Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies. What is one important characteristic which helps define each region and differentiate it from the other two? (Mexico – the largest country, economically and demographically, Central America – small countries all on the Isthmus of Panama, and the West Indies are all Islands.)

5. **Mexico**
6. **Central America** (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama)
7. **The West Indies** (divided into the Antilles, Florida and the Dry Tortugas, The Bahamas and Turks/Caicos, and other islands)
8. **The Antilles** (divided into the Greater, or larger Antilles, and the lesser, or smaller Antilles)
9. **Greater Antilles** (Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico)
10. **Lesser Antilles** (divided into Leeward, Windward and other Islands)

4. **Review:** Have students repeat aloud the names of the countries in each of these regions:

1. **Anglo America** *(US, Canada)*
2. **Latin America** *(South America, Middle America)*
3. **Middle America** *(Mexico, Central America, West Indies)*
4. **Central America** (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama)
5. **West Indies** *(The Antilles, Florida and Dry Tortugas, Bahamas/Turks/Caicos, other islands)*
6. **The Antilles** *(Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles)*
7. **Greater Antilles** *(Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico)*
8. **Lesser Antilles** *(Leeward Islands, Windward Islands, Other Lesser Antilles)*

5. **Conclusion:** Regions are made by people to help organize the world. What you have done here is create a nested hierarchy. As we go down the hierarchy from the Western Hemisphere to specific countries and islands, the regional characteristics become more specific and unique, but still have some of the defining characteristics of larger regions.
GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

1. Western Hemisphere

2. Latin America

3. Anglo America

4. United States

5. Canada

6. South America

7. Middle America

8. Mexico

9. Central America

10. The West Indies

11. The Antilles

12. Florida and Dry Tortugas

13. Bahamas Turks/Caicos

14. Other Islands

15. Greater Antilles

16. Lesser Antilles

17. Leeward Islands

18. Windward Islands

19. Other Lesser Antilles

16 MAIN ISLANDS

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Middle America

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