

Fun projects teaching geography for kids

Teaching kids involves a lot of creativity for successful learning. At the grade school level, subjects in the field of science can fail to grab the attention of a youngster, simply due to the poor presentation of the topic. Geography is one subject that is well suited to modeling. Here are a couple of projects that are terrific lessons in geography for kids, inspiring enthusiasm with a hands-on art project. Kids get to team up at a table and create three dimensional maps that show a bird's eye view of any geographic region you may choose. Once the kids have completed either of these projects, they'll have a firm grasp of the principles of geography and may likely be wanting to know more.

The choice of geographic region is up to you. You may want to choose your home state, your county or the entire United States. When deciding, you'll want to include a wide mix of geographic elements if possible. If you choose a region which has rivers, lakes, mountains, seashore and grasslands, the kids will get a good concept of the many variations of geographic areas. For example, a region such as the Northwest, the South or a state such as California are diverse enough to be representative, while being a manageable project scope.

Now you're ready to purchase the supplies you'll need. Get a piece of plain masonite approximately 24 x 48 inches. You'll also need modeling clay, a set of acrylic paints, brushes and a map of your region from the U.S. Geographic Service. Craft aprons are a good idea. O.K. Class time!

Use the map to show the kids how you read the map, where hilly and mountainous areas show the contours of elevations. Explain how to find lakes and rivers. Give the kids a basic visual tour. Let them know how they are going to translate this map into a 3-D picture with modeling clay and then paint their map. Let them get their modeling clay and go for it! You can use craft sticks to put scores in mountains and rivers to demonstrate the unevenness of actual terrain and moving water.

Try not to be too picky on precise placement. The main point is to show geographic variances. When the kids have the geographic elements placed in a fair representation of your map, it's time to get out the paint.

When the project is complete, set the map in the class room where it can be admired. You can use it throughout the year to graphically demonstrate further lessons in geography for kids, lessons they'll retain.

Another variation on this kids geography lesson is depicting cross-sections of geographic elements. Sandstone cliffs, the earth's crust or volcanic areas are

excellent geography for kids projects, showing the layers of clay, shale, granite and other materials.

Try one of these projects with your kids. Geography may be a favorite subject thereafter.