

1.1 GEOGRAPHY OF GERMANY

? FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- Why do people decide to live where they do or move to other places?
- Why is location important?
- How do people interact with the environment and what are some of the consequences of those interactions?
- What physical and other characteristics lead to the creation of regions?
- How do maps, globes, geographic tools and geospatial technologies contribute to the understanding of people, places, and environments?

STANDARD #3 PEOPLE, PLACES AND ENVIRONMENTS.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

After a review of basic geography of Germany, the students will focus on one of several projects — a brochure of one of the German *Länder* (states) using the five themes of geography: location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, regions; an interactive map activity using the internet, or specialty maps created from statistical data.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Although *The National Standards: Geography for Life* (developed in 1996) identified six overarching geography standards as a framework for geographic instructions, many teachers still use the 1984 “five themes of geography” created by the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) and the Association of American Geographers (AAG) to facilitate geographic education and provide an effective organizational structure for the teaching of geography. By using these themes (location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, regions) as the basis for understanding geographic information, teachers can help students to gain a better appreciation of cultural and environmental changes around the world.

Germany (or officially, The Federal Republic of Germany) is situated in the heart of Europe surrounded by the North Sea, Denmark, and the Baltic Sea on the north; by Poland and the Czech Republic on the east; by Austria and Switzerland on the south; and by France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands on the west. The Alps are located in the south; some of the largest European rivers – the Rhine, the Danube and the Elbe – flow through Germany. In area, it is the sixth largest country in Europe. Its territory encompasses roughly 357,000 square kilometers or 138,000 square miles.

German landscapes are extraordinarily varied: A plain dotted with lakes, moors, marshes, and heaths retreats from the sea (in the north) and reaches inland, where it becomes a landscape of hills crisscrossed by streams, rivers, and valleys. These hills lead upward, gradually forming high plateaus and woodlands and eventually culminating in the spectacular mountain ranges of the Alps. As of the mid-1990s, about 37 percent of the country’s area was arable; 17 percent consisted of meadows and pastures;



30 percent was forests and woodlands; and 16 percent was devoted to other uses.

Germany is a parliamentary federal republic of sixteen states or *Länder*. The territory of former East Germany (divided into five new *Länder* in 1990) constitutes almost one-third of united Germany's territory and one-fifth of its population. After a close vote in 1993, the Bundestag, the lower house of Germany's parliament, voted to transfer the capital and seat of government from Bonn in the west to Berlin, a city-state in the east surrounded by the Land of Brandenburg. Other major German cities are Munich, Hamburg, Bremen, Hanover, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Düsseldorf.

After reunification in 1990, Germany became a founding member of the European Union. Among the nations of the EU, it has the largest population (approximately 82 million people), the world's fourth largest economy, and is one of the largest exporters of goods to other parts of the world.

Source:

German Information Center USA. (n.d.). Facts About Germany. Retrieved 2011, from <http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de>

TIME:



(2-4) 45 minute class periods

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- Germany Quiz with Answers (**Handouts 1.1.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Icebreaker Activity (**Handout 1.1.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Handout on Five Themes of Geography (**Handout 1.1.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Outline Map of Germany (**Handout 1.1.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- "German Land Tri-fold Brochure" project (**Handout 1.1.5 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Data Handouts (**Handout 1.1.6 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Specialty Maps PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 1.1.7 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Histogram Handout (**Handout 1.1.8 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Access to computer and internet

PROCEDURE:



This series of lessons presupposes a basic knowledge of the geography of Germany and builds upon this through different activities which allow students to use the resources of the internet and computer software to create brochures, interactive maps, and specialty maps.

DAY 1:

ANTICIPATORY SET: Students should have a rudimentary comprehension of Germany and its chief physical features and principal cities. The teacher should assess their knowledge through the administration of a "fun fact" quiz (**Handout 1.1.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**). The teacher might create an Icebreaker Activity (**Handout 1.1.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**) by having students find nine students in the class who can each answer nine different questions on the geography of Germany. Teachers should also review the Five Themes of Geography (**Handout 1.1.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**) by using the students' community or state as the subject of the application. If the students need more geographic instruction the teacher should review the basics, using a wall map, individual student atlases or online maps.

DAYS 2-4:

The teacher may select from the following activities:

The German Land Tri-fold Brochure (**Resource 1.1.5 on Instructional Resource Disc**) requires students to complete online

research on one of the 16 German *Länder*. The teacher should first review the Five Themes of Geography and then explain that the students will select or be assigned one of the *Länder*. Their task is to use the five themes as the structure to create a tri-fold brochure. The students should complete the note-taking sheet using internet sources such as the following:



- **CIA– THE WORLD FACTBOOK**

(<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>)



- **FACTS ABOUT GERMANY**

(<http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/>)



- **OFFICIAL PORTAL OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

(<http://www.deutschland.de/en/state.html>).



Another activity involves creating a Virtual Tour of Germany using Google Maps or Google Earth. Rather than assign students to complete a pencil-and-paper map of Germany, students can explore the country using this available online program. Step-by-step instructions are available on-line (<http://earth.google.com/outreach/tutorials.html>) and will enable the student to complete a tour of Germany. The teacher should decide the specific requirements, based on the availability of a computer lab and/or student access to the internet at home. For example, the teacher might suggest that the students plan a tour of Germany which starts in Berlin and continues to five other cities.



Specialty maps enable students to graphically represent different statistics about Germany and its *Länder*. The students can access the most up-to-date data on a range of topics from the Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the *Länder*: <http://www.statistik-portal.de/Statistik-Portal/en/>. The teacher should assign students different sets of data (**Handout 1.1.6 on Instructional Resource Disc**), such as Tourism, Agriculture (Harvests, Livestock, Landholdings), *Bundestag* Elections, Birth/Deaths, Population, Justice, Education (General Education Students, or Vocational Pupils or Higher Education), Manufacturing and Mining, etc. The teacher should use the Specialty Maps PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 1.1.7 on Instructional Resource Disc**) to explain the technique of creating a Histogram graph and then a Choropleth Map which is a thematic map in which ranked classes of some variable are depicted with shading patterns or colors for predefined zones (categories).

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- The teacher should facilitate discussion on how the brochure, maps, geographic tools and geospatial technologies contribute to their understanding of Germany and its people.

MODIFICATIONS:

- Instead of a tri-fold brochure, the teacher could assign the students (individually or in pairs) to create a museum exhibit on the German *Länder* or a PowerPoint presentation.
- If there is no available access to a computer lab, the students could design a tour of Germany using atlases and a large outline map.
- If there is no available access to a computer lab, the creation of Specialty Maps can be done using an outline map of Germany depicting the *Länder* (**Handout 1.1.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**), the histogram template (**Handout 1.1.8 on Instructional Resource Disc**), colored markers, and statistical data (printed from the online source).

EXTENSIONS:

- The designation of a Germany Day might consist of students representing different *Länder* and taking the students on a “tour” of their area, sharing the information from their research creatively through skits, food demonstrations, etc.
- The design and construction of Specialty Maps can be extended to maps of the European Union and comparative/contrasting data of Germany and the other members of the EU.

- Students can create a webquest of Germany for elementary students based on the five themes. This would be an excellent means to assess the students' comprehension of the geography of Germany.

Source:

Sections of this lesson have been adapted from the work of 2010 TOP Fellow Michael Robinson.