Session 1: Explaining How Physical Geography Influenced the Lives of Early Humans

Materials

- Attachment A: World Map and World Image Map
- Attachment B: Comparing Paleolithic and Neolithic Peoples
- Attachment C: Placards for Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras
- Attachment D: Placards Answer Key on Comparative Table of Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras
- Attachment E: Background Knowledge and Teacher Notes
- Attachment F: Additional Maps

Instructional Activities

1. Introduction to lesson:
   In this lesson, students examine images in order to determine how early humans used the environment. Students use skills of observation to identify details in the images and then place them in eight categories: location, migration, physical geography, shelter, settlements, food acquisition, technological advancements, and social advancements. After students have learned the characteristics of the Neolithic and Paleolithic eras, they determine whether or not the images depict life in the Paleolithic or Neolithic Era. Throughout this learning activity students are challenged to make inferences and draw conclusions supported by evidence from the images. Throughout the lesson, focus student attention on the following questions:
   - How did early humans use the environment to meet their basic needs?
   - How did hunter gatherer and agricultural societies differ in their use of the land?

2. Begin the lesson by providing students an overview of the world's environments by projecting Attachment A: World Image Map. Have students predict how the world's mountains, rivers, and deserts influenced migration patterns.

3. The teacher may select one of the following two strategies for the lesson:
   Strategy 1: Gallery Walk
   - Prepare the classroom by posting Attachment C: Placards for Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras on the classroom walls, tables, or desks "gallery style," in a way that provides space for several students to cluster around each placard.
   - Distribute Attachment B: Comparing Paleolithic and Neolithic Peoples to student pairs or groups.
   - Discuss with students the eight categories and key questions on the Attachment B table - location, migration, physical environment, shelter, settlements, technological advancements, social interaction, and food acquisition.
   - Use placard Image 5 and to conduct a "think-aloud" to verbally walk students through the example provided for location. In a "think-aloud" the teacher says what she or he is thinking and models how to complete Attachment B.
   - Direct the student pairs to stand in front of one of the fourteen remaining placards. Allow students one to two minutes to examine each placard, determine the category they think it best represents, and record their observations in Column 1 of Attachment B. Remind students to draw no conclusions, simply state what is observed. The students continue the Gallery Walk by rotating through each of the fourteen placards. Use a bell or music to signify movement between placards and keep the activity on task.
   - As a whole class activity, students check answers. Remind students they are making observations, not drawing conclusions.
   - The teacher uses readings, notes, artifacts, the placards, etc. to explore with students the differences in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras. The teacher models completion of the "location" category in Column 2, as was done in Column 1.
   - Working in pairs or whole class, students complete Column 2 of Attachment B.
Strategy 2: Whole class activity

• Students are provided copies of Attachment B table and Attachment C placards and/or the teacher projects the placards in the numerical order noted on Attachment D answer key.
• The teacher discusses the eight categories and key questions on the Attachment B table - location, migration, physical environment, shelter, settlements, technological advancements, social interaction, and food acquisition.
• Students examine the placards, make observations, and complete Column 1 of Attachment B. Remind students to draw no conclusions, simply state what is observed. The teacher uses a "think-aloud" to verbally walk students through the example provided for the "location" category.
• The teacher uses readings, notes, artifacts, the placards, etc. to explore the differences in the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras.
• Students complete Column 2 of the Attachment B table.


Review by distributing the placards randomly to students and asking them to stand and explain why they think their placard is evidence to prove the following statements:

• Life in early hunter-gatherer societies was shaped by their physical environment.
• Homo sapiens emerged in east Africa between 100,000 and 400,000 years ago.
• Homo sapiens migrated from Africa to Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas.
• Early humans were hunters and gatherers whose survival depended on the availability of wild plants and animals.

To assess, students are directed to use the information from Attachment B and write a response to the following question: How did early humans overcome the limits set by their environment? Students must use the following terms in their response:

• technology
• hunter-gatherer
• nomadic
• agriculture
• domestication

Maps may be customized by turning specific layers on or off before display. [Link to explanation of layered pdfs.]