



Lesson Plan—The Geography of Afghanistan

Objectives:

Students will: Practice general map-reading skills.

Be able to locate and identify Afghanistan and its neighbors on a map.

Identify major geographical landmarks on a map.

Explore ethnic distribution in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Required Reading:

Before beginning the lesson, students should have read “Part I: Afghanistan’s People and History.”

Note:

This simple exercise is designed to acquaint students with the basic geography covered in the reading.

Colored pencils might be helpful for each group as students fill in their maps. Have students read all the directions carefully before beginning the exercise.

Teachers may want students to refer to their maps as they continue reading. Some students may find it helpful to record the date of significant events on the map where they took place.

Scholars Online:

There are short, free videos designed to be used with this lesson. Additional videos can be found at <www.choices.edu/afghanistanmaterials>.

Handouts:

“Part I: Afghanistan’s People and History”

“The Geography of Afghanistan”

“Afghanistan”

“Afghanistan and its Neighbors”

“Physical and Political Map of Afghanistan”

“Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan”

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question—Write the question “How does geography affect Afghanistan?” on the board. Ask students to recall information about Afghanistan’s geography and history from their reading. How has physical geography affected history in Afghanistan?

You may wish to show students the following Scholars Online videos as an introduction to the activity. Alternatively, show the videos after students complete the map activity, prior to class discussion.

“How has Afghanistan’s geography affected its history?” and “What is daily life like in Afghanistan?” by Jennifer Fluri of Dartmouth College, and “How was Afghanistan affected by more powerful countries and empires on its borders?” and “Why does Pakistan want to play an influential role in Afghanistan?” by Benjamin Hopkins of George Washington University.

2. Forming Small Groups—Divide the class into groups of three or four. Distribute the worksheet and maps to each group. Each group should read and follow the instructions.

3. Sharing Conclusions—After about twenty minutes, call on students to share their findings. Ask students to make connections to the reading when they can. What geographic feature divides Afghanistan into four regions? How have the different regions of Afghanistan been influenced by/connected with neighboring countries throughout history? Encourage students to label the map with characteristics of the different regions that they learned about from the reading.

Tell students that in 1893, Britain established the Durand Line, the modern-day border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. What major ethnic group did this divide in half? Why is the border a source of controversy for the two countries today? Can students think of another international border that divides an ethnic group?