

Cacao Tree Geography

Grade levels: K-3

Standards:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1.1.3 F, 1.6.3 D, 1.6.3 E

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Geography

7.1.3 A, 7.1.3 B, 7.2.3 A

Materials: Cacao Tree Map – one per student
Cacao Tree Map overhead for teacher use
crayons

Teacher Background:

This lesson will allow your students to become familiar with one of chocolate's most important ingredients...the cocoa bean. Cocoa beans are the seeds found inside cacao (ka-kow) pods which grow on cacao trees all over the world.

Cacao trees grow in a small area of the world spanning 20 degrees north and south of the equator. The trees grow melon-like fruit called cacao pods. These cacao pods are harvested by hand, and inside each pod are 20-40 seeds. These seeds inside are the cocoa beans that give chocolate its unique and special flavor.

There are approximately 3.5 million cacao farms worldwide. Africa is the leading cacao producing continent generating 70% of the world's cacao. Cacao trees are also grown on the continents of North America, South America, and Asia. Major cacao-growing countries include Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and Indonesia.

This lesson will introduce your students to where cacao trees are located throughout the world and how they are a necessary part of the chocolate-making process. It will also review their knowledge of continents and colors.

Lesson Plan

Essential Question: Where does chocolate come from?

Vocabulary:

1. Map – a representation usually on a flat surface of the whole or part of an area
2. Cacao tree – tropical American tree that produces cacao beans

Activating Strategies:

Step 1 – Read the essential question to the students. Allow them time to brainstorm with a partner where they think chocolate comes from.

Step 2 – Have students share their ideas on where chocolate comes from and write their thoughts on the board or on butcher paper.

Step 3 – Go over the vocabulary for the lesson.

Teaching Strategies:

Step 1 – Discuss with your students that cacao trees are what produces cocoa beans. Show students pictures of the cacao tree and cacao pods while sharing with them the information on where cacao trees are located throughout the world (see Teacher's Background above).

Step 2 – Pass out a Cacao Tree Geography map to each student and have each student locate Hershey, Pennsylvania, and circle it. *You may want to have copied a map onto an overhead to help students locate various places throughout the lesson.

Step 3 – Help students find the Equator and trace the line in blue. Point out to students the 20 degrees N and S lines to show the main region where cacao trees grow.

Step 4 – Discuss that Africa is the world's leading cacao producer. Find Africa on the map and have the students color it brown (for chocolate). Have students also color the island of Madagascar (off the southeastern side of Africa) brown as well. The countries in Africa that produce cacao are Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sao Tome, Principe, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Cameroon.

Step 5 – South America is another continent that produces cacao. Have students locate South America and color it red. The countries in South America that produce cacao are Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Columbia.

Step 6 - Cacao trees are also found in Central America – the southern portion of the continent of North America. Find Central America on the map and color it green. The countries that produce cacao in Central America are Mexico, Costa Rica, and Panama.

Step 7 - Find the Caribbean islands on the map and color them purple. The islands that produce cacao are the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago.

Step 7 - Have students locate Indonesia on the map. Indonesia is part of the continent of Asia and is located off the southeastern corner. Color Indonesia yellow.

Summarizing Strategies:

Discuss with students that cacao trees are located in the continents and countries closest to the equator because of the warm climate. Without these trees, we wouldn't have one of our favorite treats – chocolate! Teachers can collect the students' individual maps and use as a display if desired.

Extension Activity:

Use a world map with the countries identified on it and have students locate the individual cacao growing countries and label each one.

Bibliography

McMahon Jr, James D. Built On Chocolate – The Story of the Hershey Chocolate Company. Los Angeles: General Publishing Group, 1998.

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