

Mapping it out



Grades 6-8 | Activity Option 1 | ⌚ 50 minutes

Students will use facts they learn to create geo poems to share with their friends and family.

Step 1 (5 minutes)

Explain the fun activity students will get to do with you today.

- They will be creating geo poems about different geographic locations.

Geo Poem - a rhyming or non-rhyming poem that is eight lines long and is written in the outlined shape of the geographic region it is about.

Step 2 (15 minutes)

Have each student choose a country.

1. France
2. United States
3. England
4. India
5. China
6. Australia
7. Peru
8. Mexico

Materials



Construction paper



Pencils/pens



Student handout



Country fun facts

Distribute the **country fun facts** sheets accordingly (pgs. 4-19). Tell the students they will use the facts from their research to create their geo poems.

Ask the students to take notes on the following types of information for their presentations:

- _____ **Popular foods**
- _____ **Landmarks, landscapes, climate, bodies of water**
- _____ **Countries/geography around them**
- _____ **Customs, languages spoken, attire worn**
- _____ **Cultures, ethnicities, religions/faiths**
- _____ **Historical events, issues/challenges**

Step 3 (15 minutes)

Distribute the **student handout** with instructions and a sample geo poem.

Have each student make an outline of their country on construction paper based on the template provided in the **country fact sheet**. They should then draw eight guidelines in pencil across the country within the borders or as the borders (if possible). Certain countries have narrow borders, so encourage students to be creative with the borders and their poems.

Step 4 (10 minutes)

- Have the student present their poem to friends and family. Record the presentation on a computer or phone. To facilitate a discussion, ask the students:
 - ✓ Name one thing you found most interesting about your country.
 - ✓ Name one thing that your your country has in common with another country.
 - ✓ If you could visit a country different from yours, which would it be and why.

Step 5 (5 minutes)

- Applaud the presentations.
- Let them know how much you enjoyed being with them.

Student handout

Draw an outline of the country on a blank sheet of paper. Draw 8 lines across the country. Use the facts about the country to create a geo poem using this pattern:

- **Lines 1 and 8:** the name of the country
- **Line 2:** three to four physical features
- **Line 3:** one to three cultural features – for example, landmarks, museums, main cities
- **Line 4:** bordering countries or bodies of water
- **Line 5:** a short description about the climate
- **Line 6:** three historical events that shaped the country
- **Line 7:** issues or challenges of importance – for example, poverty, poor soil, war, pollution

Example:



France

Key facts

- **Name:** French Republic
- **Capital city:** Paris
- **Population:** 67,059,890 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** Euro
- **Ethnicity:** Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese and Basque minorities
- **Language:** French (official) 100%; rapidly declining regional dialects and languages include Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice, Nantes, Strasbourg
- **Name:** The name France is from the Latin word “Francia,” meaning country of the Franks, a Germanic people who conquered the area during the 5th century
- **National day:** July 14, “Bastille Day”
- **Industry:** Machinery, chemicals, automobiles, metallurgy, aircraft, electronics, textile
- **Agriculture:** Wheat, cereals, sugar beets, potatoes, beef, fish
- **Exports:** Machinery and transportation equipment, aircraft, plastics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food

Other facts

- The countries of French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Reunion are also recognized as a part of France.
- Mainland France belongs to the continent of Europe. The bordering countries are Andorra, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Spain and Switzerland.
- The Alps mountain range on the border of France and Italy is home to France’s highest mountain, Mont Blanc, which stands at 15,771 feet high.
- French is the second most studied language in the world after English.
- Some 85% of France’s 65.5 million inhabitants live in urban areas.
- France has the second largest population in Europe after Germany, making up 13 percent of the European Union.
- France is the most visited country in the world, with over 80 million visitors every year.
- The current emblem has been a symbol of France since 1953, although it does not have any legal status as an official coat of arms. It is printed on the cover of French passports.
- The Louvre is the most visited art museum in the world. The famous Mona Lisa painting is on display in this museum.

France (continued)

- During World War II, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy in northern France. The first day of these landings is called D-Day.
- There are over 1,000 different types of cheese made in France.
- The famous Eiffel Tower in Paris was built as the entrance point for the 1889 World's Fair. It is one of the most visited monuments in the world.
- The legal system in France is still largely influenced by Napoleon Bonaparte. French law is still based on the principles set down in Napoleon's Civil Code in the 1800s.
- France's official name is the French Republic (République Française). It became a republic in 1792, after centuries of royal rule, as a result of the French Revolution. The Revolution started with the storming of the Bastille fortress on July 14, 1789, an event that is celebrated every year all over France on "Bastille Day."

United States

Key facts

- **Name:** United States of America; U.S.A; U.S.
- **Name origin:** America is named after the Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci
- **Capital city:** Washington, D.C.
- **Currency:** U.S. dollar
- **Ethnicity:** European American/White 77%, Hispanic 17%, African American 13%, Asian American 5%, American Indian 1.2%
- **Languages:** English 82%, Spanish 11%, others
- **Largest cities:** (by population) New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, Philadelphia
- **National day:** July 4, "Independence Day"
- **Population:** 328,239,520 (2019 estimate)
- **Industry:** Petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics
- **Agriculture:** Wheat, corn, other grains, fruits, beef, forest products, fish
- **Exports:** Capital goods, automobiles, industrial supplies and raw materials, consumer goods, agricultural products

Other facts

- On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was issued, establishing the United States of America.
- The U.S. is the third largest country in the world by land area and third by population.
- The U.S. has the world's largest economy.
- The Mississippi and Missouri Rivers combine to form the longest river system in the U.S. and the fourth longest in the world.
- The tallest mountain the U.S. is Mt. McKinley, located in the state of Alaska; it reaches 20,320 feet (6,194 m) above sea level.
- The Great Seal of the United States was developed by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson at the direction of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1776. A final design was approved in 1782, and today both sides are found on the back of the U.S. one-dollar bill and often stamped onto specific documents, including foreign treaties and presidential proclamations.
- Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867 and is the largest state in the U.S. by land area.
- Hawaii is the most recent of the 50 states in the U.S. (joining in 1959) and is the only one made up entirely of islands.

United States (continued)

- The most populated city in the U.S. is New York City, followed by Los Angeles and Chicago.
- The first man to walk on the moon was American Neil Armstrong (July 21, 1969).
- The U.S. was the leading force behind the development of the Internet.
- The U.S. consumes more petroleum than any other country in the world.
- The most popular team sports in the U.S. are American football, baseball, basketball and ice hockey.
- The lowest temperature ever recorded in the United States was at Prospect Creek, Alaska, on January 23, 1971. The temperature was -80°F (-62°C). The hottest temperature recorded in the United States (and in North America) was in Death Valley, California on July 10, 1913. The temperature measured 134°F (56°C).
- The deepest lake in the U.S. is Crater Lake located in Oregon. At 1,932 feet (589 m) it is the world's seventh deepest lake. Crater Lake was formed via snowmelt and precipitation that gathered in a crater created when an ancient volcano, Mount Mazama, erupted about 8,000 years ago.
- Alaska has the longest coastline in the United States at 6,640 miles (10,686 km).

England

Key facts

- **Name:** England
- **Name origin:** The name England comes from a group of Saxons who conquered the area and called themselves, “Engle.”
- **Capital city:** London
- **Population:** 56,286,961 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** British Pound Sterling (GBP), commonly referred to as “pounds”
- **Ethnicity:** White 88.2%, Asian 5.7%, Black 2.8%, Mixed 1.7%, Chinese 0.9%, other 0.7%
- **Language:** English
- **Largest cities:** (by population) London, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Wakefield, Coventry
- **National day:** April 23, “St. George’s Day”
- **Industry:** Machine tools, electric power equipment, automation equipment, railroad equipment, shipbuilding
- **Agriculture:** Cereals, oilseed, potatoes, vegetables, cattle, fish
- **Exports:** Manufactured goods, fuels, chemicals, food, beverages, tobacco

Other facts

- England is the most populated country in the United Kingdom. The other countries that make up the United Kingdom are Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- England is bordered by Wales to the west and Scotland to the north.
- England includes many small islands such as the Isle of Wight and Hayling Island.
- There is only a 21 mile gap between England and France. The countries are connected by a 35-minute commute in the Channel Tunnel, which opened in 1994.
- The official animal is the lion and is represented on their national coat of arms.
- England was the first industrialized nation as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which began around 1760.
- Famous English scientists include Charles Darwin, Michael Faraday, Isaac Newton and Stephen Hawking, among many others.
- The longest river in the United Kingdom is the River Severn. Located in England and Wales, it stretches around 220 miles in length.
- The longest river found entirely in England is the River Thames. It flows through London and is around 215 miles in length.
- The largest lake in England is named Windermere.

England (continued)

- The highest mountain in England is Scafell Pike, which stands at around 3,209 feet.
- English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee is credited with inventing the World Wide Web.
- There have been a number of influential English authors, but perhaps the most well-known is the playwright William Shakespeare, who wrote classics such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*.
- Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in England, but others such as cricket and rugby have large followings.
- The Summer Olympic Games have been held in London three times: in 1908, 1948 and 2012.
- The official London home of the British monarchy (currently Queen Elizabeth II) is Buckingham Palace. Buckingham Palace has 775 rooms. These include 19 state rooms, 52 royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms.
- The unofficial food is fish and chips and the unofficial drink is tea.

India

Key facts

- **Name:** Republic of India
- **Name origin:** From the Old Persian word Hindu, the local name for the Indus River
- **Capital city:** New Delhi
- **Population:** 1,366,417,750 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** Indian rupee (INR)
- **Ethnicity:** Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3%
- **Language:** Hindi 41%, Bengali 8.1%, Telugu 7.2%, Marathi 7%, Tamil 5.9%, Urdu 5%, Gujarati 4.5%, Kannada 3.7%, Malayalam 3.2%, Oriya 3.2%, Punjabi 2.8%, Assamese 1.3%, Maithili 1.2%, other 5.9%
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore, Chennai
- **National day:** January 26, “Republic Day”
- **Religion:** Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other 1.8%
- **Motto:** “Satyameva Jayate” (“Truth Alone Triumphs”)
- **Industry:** Textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining
- **Agriculture:** Rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, cattle, fish
- **Exports:** Textile goods, gems and jewelry, engineering goods, chemicals, leather products

Other facts

- India has the second largest population in the world.
- India is the seventh largest country by total area.
- India belongs to the continent of Asia. It is bordered by the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Nepal and Pakistan.
- The highest mountain in India is Kanchenjunga, standing at 28,209 feet, which is shared with Nepal. Kanchenjunga is the third highest mountain in the world.
- Because of India’s location, it experiences periods of heavy rain called “monsoons.”
- The Taj Mahal (a famous monument and popular tourist attraction) is located in the region of Agra.
- India became an independent nation in 1947 after breaking free from British colonial rule, which began in 1858.
- Mahatma Gandhi is famous for the important part he played in gaining India’s independence. Gandhi’s actions emphasized non-violence and non-cooperation as a form of resistance.
- India’s coat of arms contains four Indian lions (symbolizing royalty and pride) standing on a wheel, known as the Ashoka Chakra (which represents truth and honesty).

India (continued)

- Once British rule was over, India was split into the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Later, an area between India and Pakistan became the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- The national symbol of India is the endangered Bengal tiger.
- The most popular sport in India is cricket.
- India hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, but has never hosted the Olympic Games.
- Mumbai is the largest city and is home to Bollywood, India's film industry.

China

Key facts

- **Name:** People's Republic of China
- **Name origin:** Derived from the Persian "Cin," whose meaning and origin is unknown
- **Capital city:** Beijing
- **Population:** 1,397,715,000 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** Yuan (CNY)
- **Ethnicity:** Han Chinese 91.5%, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uighur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean and other nationalities 8.5%
- **Language:** Standard Chinese or Mandarin (official), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka and many other dialects
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Shanghai, Zhumadian, Beijing, Nanchong, Tai'an, Yueyang, Kaifeng, Wuhan, Chongqing, Chengdu
- **National day:** October 1, "National Day"
- **Industry:** Iron and steel, coal, machine building, armaments, textiles and apparel, petroleum, cement
- **Agriculture:** Rice, wheat, potatoes, sorghum, pork, fish
- **Exports:** Machinery and equipment, textiles and clothing, footwear, toys and sporting goods, mineral fuels

Other facts

- China is the fourth largest country by area at 9,596,960 square miles.
- China's national emblem is composed of the entrance gate to the Forbidden City in Beijing, with five stars above it representing the Communist Party of China and the four social classes.
- China belongs to the continent of Asia. Bordering countries include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Vietnam.
- The summit of Mt. Everest marks the border between China and Nepal.
- 47% of the population lives in urban areas.
- China experiences typhoons every year and also suffers from floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and droughts.
- China has the fourth longest river in the world, the Yangtze River, which reaches 3,602 miles in length. It also has the sixth longest, the Yellow River, stretching 2,900 miles.
- China is the second largest economy in the world, after the United States of America.

China (continued)

- China is the world's most populous country with more than 1.3 billion people – 20 percent of the Earth's population.
- In 2003, China became the third country to successfully send a person to space.
- China hosted the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.
- The Great Wall of China is the largest man-made structure in the world, stretching an incredible 5,500 miles.
- The famous giant panda is found near the Yangtze River in China.
- China's geography is highly diverse, with hills, plains and river deltas in the east and deserts, high plateaus and mountains in the west. Climate is equally varied, ranging from tropical in the south to subarctic in northeastern China.
- China's geography causes an uneven population distribution; 94 percent live in the eastern third of the country. Shandong province, with its mild coastal climate, has more than 90 million people, but Tibet, with its harsh mountain plateau climate, has less than 3 million.
- Rapid industrial development has increased pollution, with China having four of the world's ten most polluted cities when it comes to air quality.

Australia

Key facts

- **Name:** Commonwealth of Australia
- **Name origin:** From the Latin “australis,” meaning “southern”
- **Capital city:** Canberra
- **Population:** 25,364,310 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** Australian dollar (AUD)
- **Ethnicity:** English 32%, Australian 27%, Irish 7%, Italian 4%, Indigenous 3%, Scottish 2%, German 2%, Chinese 2%
- **Languages:** English 78.5%, Chinese 2.5%, Italian 1.6%, Greek 1.3%, Arabic 1.2%, Vietnamese 1%, other 8.2%, unspecified 5.7%
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Newcastle, Canberra, Wollongong, Logan City
- **National day:** January 26, “Australia Day”
- **Industry:** Mining, industrial and transportation equipment, food processing, chemicals, steel
- **Agriculture:** Wheat, barley, sugarcane, fruits, cattle
- **Exports:** Coal, gold, meat, wool, aluminum, iron ore

Other facts

- Australia is the world’s sixth largest country by area.
- Due to its large size and isolation from the rest of the world, Australia is sometimes known as the “island continent.”
- A desert area known as the “outback” covers much of the land.
- It is estimated that humans have lived in Australia for around 45,000 years.
- The indigenous people of Australia are Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.
- The highest mountain on mainland Australia is Mt. Kosciuszko, standing 7,310 feet above sea level.
- The world’s largest reef system, the Great Barrier Reef, is found off the northeastern coast of Australia.
- The Australia Coat of Arms consists of a shield portraying the badges of the six Australian states. The three states on the top half, from left to right, are New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. The bottom half, from left to right are South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. The shield symbolizes the federation of the states, which took place in 1901. Supporting the Coat of Arms are the red kangaroo and the emu, native Australian animals. Neither animal can walk backwards, thus representing progress and an unwillingness to back down. The background contains a wreath of Golden Wattle, the official national flora emblem.

Australia (continued)

- Australia has a range of different landscapes, including urban areas, mountain ranges, deserts and rain forests.
- Australia is home to a variety of unique animals, including the koala, kangaroo, emu, kookaburra and platypus.
- Although they usually keep to themselves, there are a range of dangerous snakes in Australia, such as the Brown Snake, Tiger Snake and Taipan.
- Australia has over 750 different reptile species, more than any other country in the world.
- Australia hosted the 1956 (Melbourne) and 2000 (Sydney) Summer Olympics.
- The highest mountains are part of the Great Dividing Range that lines the east coast from Cape York Peninsula south to the state of Victoria. Most people reside along the southeast coast, in cities like Melbourne or Sydney, because winds from the southeast release rain there, leaving the interior beyond the mountains too dry to support vegetation.
- Australia was founded in 1788 as a British colony. Independence came in 1901, with a constitution adapted in part from that of the United States.

Peru

Key facts

- **Name:** Republic of Peru
- **Name origin:** The name Peru comes from the word “Biru.” Biru was the name of a local ruler who lived near the Bay of San Miguel, Panama. The Spanish adopted the name in 1529.
- **Capital city:** Lima
- **Population:** 32,510,450 (2019 estimate)
- **Currency:** Peru nuevo sol (PEN)
- **Ethnicity:** Amerindian 45%, Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and White) 37%, White 15%, Black, Japanese, Chinese, and Other 3%
- **Language:** Spanish 84.1% (official), Quechua 13% (official), Aymara 1.7%, Ashaninka 0.3%, other native languages 0.7% (which includes a large number of minor Amazonian languages)
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Lima, Arequipa, Callao, Trujillo, Chiclayo, Iquitos, Huancayo, Piura, Chimbote, Cuzco
- **National day:** July 28, “Independence Day” or “Fiestas Patrias”
- **Industry:** Mining of metals, petroleum, fishing, textiles, clothing, food processing
- **Agriculture:** Coffee, cotton, sugarcane, rice, poultry, fish
- **Exports:** Fish and fish products, gold, copper, zinc, crude petroleum and byproducts

Other facts

- Peru contains the second largest segment of the Amazon rainforest after Brazil.
- The Peruvian Amazon covers 60% of the country.
- The large and biologically diverse area of the Amazon in Peru is home to the most bird species in the world, the third largest number of mammals and a very high number of species of butterflies and orchids.
- Peru shares borders with Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Bolivia.
- Modern day Peru has been home to many ancient civilizations; the largest and wealthiest of these was the Incas, whose empire ruled for over 100 years until the Spanish arrived in the 16th century.
- The capital city of Peru is Lima, which is home to more than a quarter of Peru’s population.
- The Peruvian coat of arms is largely dominated by the central shield, which is divided into three sections. The upper left section shows the national animal of Peru, the vicuña.
- The Huascarán National Park in Peru has 27 peaks over 19,685 feet above sea level. The highest of these is El Huascarán at 22,204 feet.

Peru (continued)

- Peru is one of the world's top producers of gold, silver, copper, lead, iron and zinc and also has reserves of oil and natural gas.
- The Andean highlands occupy about a third of the country and contain mostly Quechua-speaking Indians. Quechua was the language of the Inca Empire.
- Peru's recent history has seen it switch between periods of democracy and dictatorship.

Mexico

Key facts

- **Name:** United Mexican States
- **Name origin:** Mexico's name is derived from its capital city, originally named by the Aztecs, and closely related to the Mexica tribe.
- **Population:** 127,575,530 (2019 estimate)
- **Capital city:** Mexico City
- **Currency:** Mexican peso (MXN)
- **Languages:** Spanish 92.7%, regional dialects 5.7%
- **Largest cities:** (by population) Mexico City, Iztapalapa, Ecatepec, Guadalajara, Puebla de Zaragoza, Ciudad Juarez
- **National day:** September 16, "Independence Day"
- **Industry:** Food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel
- **Agriculture:** Corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beef, wood products
- **Exports:** Manufactured goods, oil and oil products, silver, fruits, vegetables

Other facts

- Mexico is the 11th most populated country in the world.
- Mexico is the 14th largest country by land area.
- There are 31 states in Mexico, as well as the capital city (Mexico City).
- Mexico is home to over 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and is a popular tourist destination.
- Stone tools have been found in Mexico that suggest the existence of humans there around 23,000 years ago.
- The highest mountain in Mexico is Pico de Orizaba, a dormant volcano that reaches 18,491 feet above sea level.
- The national symbol of Mexico is the golden eagle, which features prominently on the coat of arms. The coat of arms depicts a golden eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus, eating a snake. This symbolism had strong religious connotations to the Tenochtitlan people. To the Europeans, it symbolized the triumph of good over evil.
- In 2000, Mexico became the 11th country in the world to have 100 million people – more than double its 1970 population of 48 million. With more than 19 million people, greater Mexico City is one of the world's largest urbanized areas. Tough environmental restrictions have been enacted to cope with increasingly dangerous levels of air and water pollution.
- Mexican food is known for its range of flavors and spices. Popular dishes include tacos, burritos and enchiladas.

Mexico (continued)

- The most popular sport in Mexico is football (soccer).
- Mexico is one of the world's largest oil producers – oil and gas provide a third of the government's revenue.
- Mexico hosted the Football World Cup in both 1970 and 1986.
- Mexico City hosted the Summer Olympic Games in 1968.