

5: Letters from the Road

Based on the West Virginia quarter reverse



OBJECTIVE

Students will identify and differentiate between rural, urban, and suburban communities. They will also identify the parts of a friendly letter and will compose their own letters based on their new knowledge of rural communities.



MATERIALS

- Chart paper or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- Artifacts from rural, urban, and suburban communities (images and concrete materials)
- Sentence strips
- 1 overhead projector (optional)
- “West Virginia Quarter Reverse” page
- 1 class map of the United States
- Copies of an age-appropriate text about rural areas, such as:
 - *Get Around in the Country* by Lee Sullivan Hill
 - *Goodnight, Country* by Susan Verlander
 - *Town Mouse Country Mouse* by Jan Brett
- Writing paper
- Drawing paper
- Letter-size envelopes



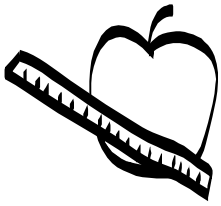
PREPARATIONS

- Make an overhead transparency (or photocopy) of the “West Virginia Quarter Reverse” page.
- Gather an assortment of artifacts from rural, urban, and suburban communities.
- Display the artifacts for the different communities in three corners of the classroom (one corner per community).
- Create labels for each type of community and place them in corresponding corners.
- Locate an age-appropriate text that relates to rural areas (see examples under “Materials”).



GROUPINGS

- Whole group
- Pairs
- Individual work



Letters from the Road



CLASS TIME

Two 30- to 45-minute sessions



CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies
- Language Arts



TERMS AND CONCEPTS

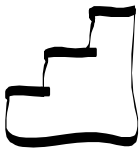
- Quarter
- Reverse (back)
- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban
- Friendly Letter
- Greeting
- Community
- Closing
- Signature



BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Students should have a basic knowledge of:

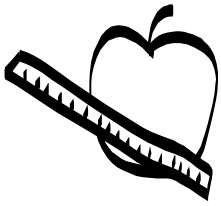
- The community in which they live
- Communities outside their own
- Outdoor activities
- Friendly letter writing



STEPS

Session 1

1. Before the start of class, place an assortment of artifacts (including images and concrete materials) in three corners of the classroom. Each corner should represent a different type of community: rural, urban, and suburban. Place a label for the appropriate community in each corner.
2. Begin this activity with a class discussion of where the students live. Ask the students to describe the local area. Record all responses on a piece of chart paper or on the chalkboard.

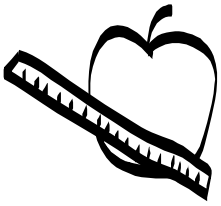


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3. Explain that there are different types of communities in our country and that the students will get a chance to explore the differences between these communities. Direct the students to take a few minutes to walk around the classroom and explore each corner.
4. Regroup and, as a class, discuss each of the corners of the room. Ask the students to describe what they saw in each corner. The students should be able to accurately describe the characteristics of the three different communities.
5. As the students describe the three communities, record their responses on three different pieces of chart paper, labeling each with the appropriate community name (“urban,” “rural,” and “suburban”).
6. Discuss with the students which type of community they believe they live in. Compare the students’ community chart from step 2 to the three community charts that the students have just developed.
7. Ask the students to consider which type of community they believe has the largest number of people living in it and why. Students should choose urban settings as having the largest populations because there are more jobs in cities, etc. Add this information to the “urban” community chart.
8. Ask the students to consider which type of community would have the fewest people living in it and why. The students should be able to identify that rural settings have the smallest populations. Explain that rural settings are often agricultural communities and that rural populations need land when growing crops and raising animals. Add this information to the “rural” community chart.
9. Ask the students what word they hear in the word “suburban.” The students should hear the word “urban,” which they know means “city.”
10. Explain that suburban communities are towns that are near to, but outside of, cities. Ask the students to discuss why people would choose to live in a suburban community. Some ideas may include that people work in urban communities, but may want more land or less crowding where they live. Add student ideas to the “suburban” community chart.
11. Explain that, in the next session, the students will be looking more closely at one specific type of community.

Session 2

1. Describe the 50 State Quarters® Program for background information, if necessary, using the example of your own state, if available. Then display the transparency or photocopy of the West Virginia quarter reverse. Locate West Virginia on a classroom map. Note its position in relation to your school’s location.
2. With the students, examine the coin design. Have the students point out the elements of this design, including the mountains, trees, and river, and also the words “New River Gorge.”



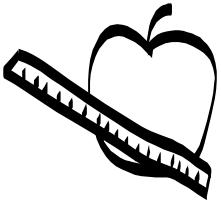
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3. Based on the class discussion, have the students consider what kind of community they believe is shown on this coin.
4. Have the students discuss what they believe people living in this part of West Virginia would do for work and for fun.
5. Ask the students what kinds of things they think they would do if they were to go on a class field trip to this area. Record student responses. Explain that, throughout the year, people camp and hike along this river, bungee jump and repel from this bridge, go rafting in the water, and enjoy many other outdoor activities.
6. As a class, pretend to go on a field trip to the New River Gorge. Explain that, on this field trip, the students are camping there overnight and want to write a letter to someone special to tell them all about the camping experience.
7. As a class, discuss how one would go about writing a letter to someone. Talk about what kind of letter this would be and what kind of information should be included.
8. Introduce the selected text about rural areas. Preview the text and illustrations and allow the students to generate observations and predictions about what is happening at each point in the text.
9. Read the selected text to the class. Attend to any unfamiliar vocabulary.
10. Discuss the different parts of a letter, including the heading, greeting, body, closing, and signature.
11. As a class, discuss what the students might want to express in the body of the letter that they will be writing. Direct the students to focus on what they previously discussed about rural communities. You may wish to give your students more background information about the New River Gorge area at this point. Record student responses.
12. Direct the students to write their letters, encouraging them to use descriptive writing. Have the students create an illustration based on their imaginary experiences camping near the New River Gorge.
13. Have each student exchange his or her letter with another classmate and point out and name the parts of the classmate's letter.
14. Distribute an envelope to each student. Have each student address the envelope to his or her person of choice, add a return address, and draw a stamp.
15. Collect the letters for assessment. Explain, if necessary, that the addressees will not actually be receiving these letters; this is only a pretend mailing.



ENRICHMENT/EXTENSION

Have students examine the types of communities shown on a variety of new quarter reverses. They could determine what type of community is depicted and write a letter to their teacher based on a fictional visit to that community.



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DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING OPTION

- Allow students to dictate or type their letters.
- Provide a framework for the letter for students to use as a guide.
- Have students create a postcard of their experience.
- Using index cards, create a concentration game for identification and recognition of the parts of a letter. Cards can include the definition, an example, or picture.



CONNECTION TO WWW.USMINT.GOV/KIDS

While Lewis and Clark weren't able to send letters home, they were able to keep careful journals of the wilderness that they explored as they journeyed west. Take some time to see what these explorers discovered on their three-year camping trip across America when you visit the Lewis and Clark Adventure game on the United States Mint H.I.P. Pocket Change™ Web site. (<http://www.usmint.gov/kids/index.cfm?fileContents=games>)



West Virginia Quarter Reverse

