Settlement Patterns of the United States

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Geographic Question: What factors, other than climate and topography, effect settlement patterns in the United States?

Overview: There are many factors that have determined the settlement patterns of the United States. These factors include topography and climate. In this lesson students will analyze maps of topography and climate to see where people would not live based on these factors. Once this determination has been made, students will then brainstorm and write about the factors that allow settlement of those areas of the United States. Through this lesson students will be able to determine the factors that allow the settlement of the “unlivable” areas of the United States.

Connections to the Curriculum:
Oregon Geography Standards:
CIM/Grade 10 Benchmark: Use, interpret and construct geographic representations to analyze information, explain spatial relationships and compare places.
Common Curriculum Goal - Compare physical and human characteristics of places and regions.

National Standards Addressed:
Standard #1 - How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
Standard #4 - The physical and human characteristics of places.
Standard #14 - How humans modify physical environments.

Grade Level:
High School
Middle School

Objectives:
The student(s) will be able to:
1. Analyze different maps of the United States.
2. Formulate reasons to why people can live in seemingly difficult areas, based on topography and climate.

Materials:
1. Map Pack. 
2. Pencil/Pen.
3. Overhead Projector.
Procedures:
*Note: Students will have learned about climate, landforms and vegetation prior to lesson.*
1. Instructor will start by posing the question:

2. Instructor will pass out map pack and map of the United States.

3. Instructor will then have students circle on their maps where they would not live based on climate and topography. In the circles students will write the reasons for not wanting to live there. Examples: Too hot, dry, cold. They will make this analysis based on the map pack only.

4. After students have had a sufficient amount of time, based on teacher observation, instructor will have all students stop and return attention to instructor.

5. Instructor will then put up on the overhead the transparency of the United States Map. Instructor will then have students come up and circle the areas on the map they would not want to live in based on climate and topography. They need to explain to the class why they chose this area. They may want to write in the circles their reasons, if possible.

6. After students have finished circling areas, instructor will put United States Population transparency on top of the United States map transparency.

7. Instructor will then review the reasons students/people would not live in these areas that have population.

8. Students will then brainstorm reasons that people can live in these areas. They will write these down on the back of their map or on a separate sheet of paper.

9. Instructor can then, if he/she wants, have students share answers and clarifications of them.

10. Instructor will then give students their writing assignments. Have students write a 1-2 page paper on these reasons and factors that allow people to live in these areas. Have students be as specific as possible.

This assignment can be modified for IEP and Special Needs students. This may include shorter assignment length and/or grading of map and brainstorm list.
*Note: You may want to score ideas/content area higher than others*
Assessment:
Instructor may assess writing by state scoring standards, but it does not have to be a work sample. Instructor can also give points, for classroom grade, based on completion of map and brainstorming list.

Extensions
1. Economics- Product Marketing in specific areas of United States. Where to produce and sell products.
2. History- Comparing these “unlivable” areas to the location of Native American Reservations in the United States.