Social Studies Grade 8, Geography of Canada and the United States
Diorama Project

**Topic A** - Geography of Canada and the United States

**Issues/Questions for Inquiry**
**Major:** To what extent does physical environment influence a people’s way of life?

**Knowledge Objectives**
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the following:

- **Major Generalization** - The interaction of people with their physical environment influences patterns of life
- **Generalizations** - People are constantly interacting with their physical environment to meet their needs.
- **Concepts** - Environmental Interaction
- **Related Concepts/Terms/Facts** – adaptation

**Skill Objectives (throughout unit)**

- **Process Skills**
  - analyzing/synthesizing/evaluating
  - locating/Interpreting/Organizing
  - identify possible sources and location of information
  - read/interpret maps to identify relationships between human and physical geography
  - make notes (jottings, point form, webbing) that outline main/related ideas from reading and while listening
  - draw conclusions about the relationship of geography to the patterns of life in Canada
  - make generalizations by stating relationships among concepts about interactions of people with their physical environment
  - categorize information to develop concepts-regions, environmental interaction

- **Communication Skills**
  - construct diorama demonstrating use of scale and physical geography, that represents how the physical environment influences a people’s way of life and/or vice versa.

- **Participation Skills**
  - converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small groups and whole class discussions
  - observe courtesies of group discussion, such as speaking in turn, using appropriate tone and giving feedback in a non-threatening manner

**Attitude Objectives**
Students will be encouraged to develop:

- appreciation for consequences of people’s interaction with their environment

**Materials:** For this project students will need access to the computer lab and the Internet. They will also need shoe boxes or cardboard boxes of some kind, scissors, glue, leaves, twigs, sand, paint, pencil crayons, felt markers, tooth picks, and any other art or craft supply they want to use when building their Diorama.
Geography of Canada and the United States Diorama Project

Diorama Project: Part 1 – Starting to Learn (1 class period)

With the class, brainstorm a list of ways that the physical landscape influences a people’s way of life, and vice versa. Get students to give you examples from their own lives/surroundings or current events. Be sure to discuss and explain the curriculum generalizations and concepts (interaction of people with their physical environment influences patterns of life, environmental interaction, adaptation) thoroughly as they will need this understanding in order to represent it in a diorama. Students will also need to be familiar with Dioramas. After you have created a good list from the brainstorm session, show students the location of Aspenland on a map so that they have an idea of where in the world it is located (use relative and absolute location). Discuss the different physical features found in the region, using the appropriate geographical terms so students can get a mental picture of what Aspenland looks like.

Tell students that next class they will be navigating the Woman of Aspenland website to find examples of environmental interaction whereby people are meeting their needs, or being influenced (adaptation) by their physical surroundings.

Skill Objectives
Students will be able to do the following:

- **Process Skills**
  - Locating/Interpreting/Organizing
    - read/interpret maps to identify relationships between human and physical geography
    - make notes (jottings, point form, webbing) that outline main/related ideas while listening and observing
    - draw conclusions about the relationship of geography to the patterns of life in Canada
    - make generalizations by stating relationships among concepts about interactions of people with their physical environment

- **Participation Skills**
  - converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small groups and whole class discussions
Diorama Project: Part 2 – Setting the Stage (1 class period)

Once in the computer lab direct students to the Region and Social Landscape sections of the website that provide the information regarding the physical and human geography of Aspenland. The Women section of the site will also provide examples of adaptation and the influence of the physical geography on patterns of life in Aspenland. Tell students they have one class period (you might want to give them more time depending where they’re at) to obtain the information needed to accurately build their Diorama about environmental interaction in Aspenland. Remind students that environmental interaction goes in two directions: the environment influences people and people influence the environment. Students will need to locate examples in both categories and record them.

Near the end of the period pull the class together and share some of the findings, making sure to relate them to the curriculum generalizations and concepts. Give students a material list to take home so that next class they arrive with the materials needed to build their dioramas.

Skill Objectives
Students will be able to do the following:

- **Process Skills**
  - locating/Interpreting/Organizing
  - identify possible sources and location of information
  - make notes (jottings, point form, webbing) that outline main/related ideas from reading and while listening
  - analyzing/Synthesizing/Evaluating
  - draw conclusions about the relationship of geography to the patterns of life in Canada
  - make generalizations by stating relationships among concepts about interactions of people with their physical environment

- **Participation Skills**
  - converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small groups and whole class discussions
Diorama Project: Part 3 – Examining the Evidence / Building Diorama (2/3 class periods)

The purpose of this diorama is to represent the influence the physical environment has on the patterns of life of the women of Aspenland, or vice versa. Students should accurately represent and label the distinguishing geographical features of the region used in their diorama. You may want to discuss the use of scale in models. As a class decide on the evaluation rubric criteria for the assignment.

Have students review their notes from the website, and plan a scene depicting environmental interaction for their diorama. They should make a rough sketch first and show it to the teacher for approval, before actually beginning to construct the final product. Allow two work periods so that students can leave the project at school where it will not get damaged. Inform students that these dioramas will put on display in the hallway or foyer of the school, so they should do their very best work. Students will present their diorama to the rest of the class commenting on the scene depicted, and how it fulfills the criteria of the assignment. Feel free to adapt this project any way you see fit, every class is unique.

Skill Objectives
Students will be able to do the following:

- **Process Skills**
  - Analyzing/Synthesizing/Evaluating
  - draw conclusions about the relationship of geography to the patterns of life in Canada
  - categorize information to develop concepts-regions, environmental interaction
  - make generalizations by stating relationships among concepts about interactions of people with their physical environment

- **Communication Skills**
  - construct diorama demonstrating use of scale and physical geography, that represents how the physical environment influences a people's way of life and/or vice versa.

- **Participation Skills**
  - converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small groups and whole class discussions
Diorama Project: Part 4 – Pulling it Together (1 class period)

Have students present their dioramas to the class. After all students have presented their work have them write a short report (could be worth marks, your decision) that describes what they learned regarding the curriculum generalizations and concepts while researching and creating their dioramas. To provide closure discuss the presentations with the class highlighting some of the similarities and differences observed.

Skill Objectives
Students will be able to do the following:

- **Process Skills**
  - Analyzing/Synthesizing/Evaluating
  - draw conclusions about the relationship of geography to the patterns of life in Canada
  - make generalizations by stating relationships among concepts about interactions of people with their physical environment

- **Communication Skills**
  - construct diorama demonstrating use of scale and physical geography, that represents how the physical environment influences a people's way of life and/or vice versa.

- **Participation Skills**
  - converse with others in a variety of settings, including informal, small groups and whole class discussions
  - observe courtesies of group discussion, such as speaking in turn, using appropriate tone and giving feedback in a non-threatening manner

Possible Diorama Criteria

- diorama is neatly presented.
- diorama displays at least one example of physical landscape influencing patterns of life or vice versa.
- environmental interaction displayed in diorama is accurate, those types of interaction do indeed occur in Aspenland.
- the environmental interaction shown can easily be deduced.
- physical geography contained in the diorama is properly labeled.