

Lesson Title: Writing a Continents Story

Grade Levels: Grades 2-3

Lesson Description: This activity combines learning the continents with writing. After reading the descriptions of Earth in the story *If the Moon Could Talk*, students will use Google Earth to find, explore, and describe the continents. They will use their descriptions of images and natural features in the continents to write their own bedtime story.

Literature Connection

If the Moon Could Talk
By Kate Banks

If the Moon Could Talk includes descriptions of different places around the world as seen by the moon.

Concepts and skills

- Continents
- Human and physical features
- Descriptive Writing

National Geography Standards

- The location of the Earth's continents and oceans in relation to each other and to principal parallels and meridians
- The physical characteristics of places
- The human characteristics of places

Objectives: Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Locate each continent on a variety of representations of Earth, including Google Earth, maps, and globes.
2. Write a description of something on each continent.

Google Earth Skills Needed:

- Use various layers
- Zoom in and out
- Navigate with the side bar

Teaching Procedures (step-by-step directions)

1. Before reading, *If the Moon Could Talk*, ask students to raise their hands if they have seen the moon. Then ask if any of them have seen the moon when they have been in a different place or state. Tell them that the moon can be seen from all over the world, including from each of the seven continents. As a class, locate and label each of the seven continents on a large map by taping the continent's name to the appropriate place. Ask students to think about, but not say, what the moon sees each night and what it might say about all these different places that it sees. Then introduce that Kate Banks, the author of the book *If the Moon Could Talk*, considered this question and wrote a book about it.
2. Read the book to the students. At a couple of the descriptions of the places the moon sees, stop and have the kids identify what continent or place the moon could be describing, like the desert or

beach description.

3. Remind students that there are different ways of showing the world using maps. Some maps are large and flat, like the one they labeled in the beginning of the lesson and some are round, like globes. Point out that both of these maps represent the Earth from above, like the moon would see it. Announce that there is also a special way to look at the world and maps on computers: Google Earth. Explain that Google Earth also allows us to see the world from above, but is special because many people can use this map and view the Earth in many different ways. Ask them to remember what they imagined at the beginning of the story: what the moon sees all over the world. Tell them that they will continue thinking about this question with the help of Google Earth. Explain that they will get to use this special representation of Earth to explore and see pictures of each continent from above, just like the moon did in the story. Explain that they will have about five minutes to explore and write a sentence about each continent. Remind them that they are doing the same thing the moon did in the story. Review one of the pages in the book to look at how the sentence starts (If the moon could talk, it would tell...) and what the author described. Notice that the author describes the land, animals that live in it, and activities happening in the scene.
4. Before each child opens Google Earth, model turning on the layers, exploring the land, and coming up with a descriptive sentence for one of the continents. If they are unfamiliar with Google Earth, make sure to show them how to zoom in and out and use the navigation tools. Write the example sentence on the board so they can see it while they work.
5. Have each child bring up Google Earth on a computer and open the layers side bar on the left side of the screen. Ask students to turn on the following layers: Borders and Labels, Panoramio Photos, National Geographic Magazine (under Gallery), 360Cities (under Gallery), and terrain by checking the box next to each one.
6. Before the students find the first continent on Google Earth, remind them that they have already found the continents on a map. Call one of the students up to see if they can find the first continent, Europe, on the globe shown earlier in class. Then have every child find the continent on Google Earth. Double check that everyone has the correct continent and then explain that they will have the next five minutes to explore Europe. The [Continents Story worksheet](#) can be used to help the students stay focused while they explore each continent. Suggest that they click to see the photos and zoom in and out at different locations. Remind them to look for interesting sights to describe in the sentence they will write. At the end of five minutes, remind them to write their sentences (If the moon could talk, it would tell...) about something they saw in Europe using Google Earth. Give them a minute or two to complete the sentence. Remind them that the author, Kate Banks, describes the land, animals, or activities in the scene the moon sees.
7. After everyone has completed their sentence, ask students what they found and saw using Google Earth in Europe. Encourage students to mention terrain, countries, and animals they saw.
8. Repeat steps six and seven with each of the continents over the course of one or two class periods. At the end, each child should have one sentence about each of the seven continents. Have each child reread their sentences and check for complete sentences, proper punctuation, and correct spelling.
9. During the rest of the class time or during the next class, have the students work on making a book of their sentences. Using the attached page, they should write the continent on the top of each page, shade the continent in the map, write their sentence on the bottom of the page, and

illustrate each description. They should also make a title page and cover once they are done with their pages.

10. After each child is finished, have them read their story to a partner or small group. Then, as a class, discuss some of the similarities and differences between the things they saw on each of the continents.

Assessment:

Objective 1 will be assessed during the Google Earth exploration and introduction of each continent.

Objective 2 will be assessed through the sentence writing and book making portion of the lesson.

The stories can be graded using the following criteria: inclusion of an accurate one sentence description of all 7 continents, correctly identifying each continent on the world map, correct sentences and spelling, and having a title page and illustrations.