

Antarctic Politics (The Antarctic Treaty)

Integration: Social Studies; History

Grade Levels: 4-6

Time: 2-3 class periods

Materials:

- *Antarctic Treaty* handout
- Learning log or journal (optional)
- World map (optional)

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Name the leaders of their national, state, local governments.
2. Explain who owns Antarctica.
3. Examine the provisions of The Antarctic Treaty and other agreements.
4. Consider additions to the Treaty and justify exclusions.

Lesson:

1. Ask students how their country is governed. Do they have a president? King? Queen? Prime Minister? Emperor? Have the students name their country's leader. Who else helps to govern? (vice-president, congress, etc.)
2. Ask students to name the title of the person who leads their state (or other regional division). Have the students name their governor. Who else helps to govern? (lieutenant governor, state assembly, etc.)
3. Ask the students to name the leader of their local government (e.g. mayor). Have the students name their mayor, Who else helps to govern? (town council, freeholders, etc.)
4. Tell students that most places have a system of leadership. Someone is in charge.
5. Ask the students the following questions
 - a. "Who is the leader of Antarctica?" (Antarctica does not have a leader.)
 - b. "Who owns Antarctica?" (Antarctica is not owned by any one country).
6. Explain the following:
 - a. In the early 20th century seven different countries claimed parts of Antarctica as their own.

- Ask students if this could cause problems. If yes, what types of problems.
- b. In 1957-58, twelve countries cooperated on scientific experiments that concerned the Antarctica and the atmosphere. It was then agreed that the peaceful use of Antarctica for scientific experiments should be continued.
- c. The twelve countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the former USSR) signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, which became a law in 1961.
- d. Currently, 42 nations, representing 90% of the world's population have signed the Treaty.

EXTENSION: Use this as an opportunity to have children practice map skills by locating the country they are representing.

7. Distribute the handout that contains the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty. Tell students that the Treaty includes the area south of 60°S. If possible, point this out on a world map. This includes 10% of the world's land and 10% of the world's oceans.
 - a. The provisions are as follows:
 - **Antarctica is to be used for peaceful purposes only.** No military activities are allowed.
 - **There is freedom of scientific investigation.** Scientific experiments are conducted cooperatively among the different nations. Information is exchanged.
 - **No new claims can be made on the land for the duration of the treaty.**
 - **Nuclear explosions and the dumping of radioactive waste in Antarctica are banned.**
 - **All stations and equipment are open to inspection by observers appointed by Antarctic Treaty nations.**
 - b. Allow discussion of the provisions so that all students understand the meaning of each.
8. Tell students that the Antarctic Treaty is not the only agreement concerning Antarctica that has been signed.
 - a. The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals: protects some of the species of seals in Antarctica.
 - b. The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: protects the marine ecosystem against over-fishing and protects whales and some fishes.
 - c. The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Madrid Protocol): signed in 1991, it bans mining activity for 50 years and declares Antarctica a "natural reserve devoted to peace and science."
9. Tell students that all of these agreements and treaties have been signed by various countries in an effort to protect Antarctica.

Small Group

10. Divide the class into groups.

OPTIONAL: Create index cards each with the name of a country that has signed the Antarctic Treaty. Give each student a card or allow him or her to pick cards.

- a. Tell the students that they are to pretend they are leaders of different countries. Each group will contain members from different countries.
 - b. Each group is to look at the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty and the other agreements and decide what needs to be added.
 - c. They should discuss it among the members, debate it, and decide on one new addition to the laws.
 - d. They should be prepared to explain their addition and present it to the rest of the class.
11. In the same groups, the students must decide on one provision or agreement that can be eliminated. Once again, they should be prepared with an explanation of why they chose that provision, what the consequences will be, and a justification for its elimination. They will present their decision to the rest of the class.
12. Tell students that they have acted as *consultative nations*. Consultative nations are those 26 countries with interest in Antarctica (including a research station or expedition) that meet annually to discuss recommendations that will protect Antarctica. They vote on these recommendations.
13. Have the students enter what they have learned in their learning logs/journal or on a separate piece of paper.

Assessment:

Teachers will assess:

1. Student's awareness of their national, state, and local leaders.
2. Student's comprehension of the importance of the Antarctic Treaty and other agreements.
3. Student's critical thinking and reasoning in debating additions and exclusions to the provisions.
4. Student's ability to work cooperatively.