

What is Antarctica Like?

Integration: Social Studies; Language Arts; Art

Grade Levels: K-3

Time: 1 class period

Materials:

- Map of Antarctica (classroom)
- Antarctica templates (either small maps or construction paper cut-outs)
- Paper
- Drawing materials
- Sequins, glitter, etc. (optional)
- Modeling clay (optional)

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand that Antarctica is land that is almost completely covered by ice.
2. Understand that there are mountains in Antarctica.
3. Compare the Antarctica's environment to that of where they live.

Lesson:

Full group

1. Ask students to close their eyes and try to imagine what it is like in Antarctica. Allow students 1-2 minutes.
 - a. Have students relate what they imagine Antarctica is like.
 - Students may answer cold, wet, dry, flat, mountainous, grassy, etc.
2. Discuss what Antarctica is really like. Tell students that Antarctica is land that is almost completely covered by ice. Ask students how ice forms (when water freezes).
 - a. The ice in Antarctica developed a very long time ago and has not melted because it is so cold there.
 - b. It stretches out over the water in some places. Sometimes a piece of ice will break off and float away. This is an iceberg.
 - Icebergs can be very large (the size of Delaware).
 - They float in the water the way ice cubes float in a glass of water.
3. Inform students that the ice that covers Antarctica is very thick. It is about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) thick. Give students a frame of reference by bringing to their attention landmarks that are 1.5 miles (2.4 km) away.

4. Ask students if they think Antarctica is completely flat or mountainous.
 - a. Antarctica has a mountain range that runs across it called the Transantarctic Mountains. Point to the mountains on the map.
 - b. These mountains are also covered with ice.
5. Inform students that Antarctica also has volcanoes.
6. Discuss the physical differences between Antarctica and the country, state, and local area the students live in.
7. Have students draw a picture of what they think Antarctica looks like. They can add a few sentences to describe it. Have students present their drawings to the class.

OPTIONAL: Have students draw themselves living in Antarctica or write a few sentences about what it would be like to live in Antarctica.

EXTENSION #1: Give each student a small map of Antarctica or a cut out from construction paper. Have students decorate the map.

- Students can glue on sequins or other shiny materials to simulate ice.
- Students will build up the area where the Transantarctic Mountains would be and make the map 3D.

EXTENSION #2: Divide students into groups. Have students create 3D models of Antarctica using modeling clay.

Assessment:

Teachers will assess:

1. Student's ability to describe Antarctica's topography.
2. Student's ability to compare Antarctica to the local environment.
3. Student's ability to synthesize information.