Big Question/Inquiry Unit

**Big Question:** Which region in the United States is the best to live in and why?

**Grade Level:** 4th

**Standard Focus:** Standard 3: People, Places, and Environments

**Estimated Time Required:** Approx. 30 – 45 minutes per lesson

**Unit Goals and Objectives:**
- Students will be able to locate and identify the regions of the United States.
- Students will be able to identify geographical features and cultural characteristics of the regions.

**Introduction:**
Several weeks prior to the start of this unit, a letter is sent home to the student’s parents/guardians. This letter asks the parents/guardians to contact friends or relatives who live out of state, asking them to send postcards from their state of residence to the class. In these postcards, the sender would tell how life in his/her state is different from Duluth, MN. These postcards will be read each day during the unit, and then displayed on a large map of the United States. The class will try to collect at least one postcard from each of the fifty states.

**Lesson One:**
The instructor will introduce the unit by asking the students “If you could live anywhere else in the United States, where would you live? Why?” The instructor will then explain that the United States is divided into five different regions. The instructor will then pose questions such as “Why do you think that our country is divided in this way?” or “What do you think makes our country unique?” After a brief overview of each region, the instructor will explain what will be happening over the next several days. The instructor will explain that over the next five days, there will be five different stations set up around the classroom. Each station will feature resources about each of the five U.S. regions. Over the next five days, the students will need to visit each of the five stations to research each region. To help with their research, the students will be provided a retrieval chart for each region. The students may also use any information from the postcards that the class has received over the course of the unit. After the five days of research, the students will be asked to answer the question, “Which region in the United States is the best to live in and why?” based on the information they have gathered. To wrap up the lesson, the instructor will read some of the postcards that the class has received.
Lessons Two – Six:

The instructor will begin each day by reading some of the postcards that the class has received. Over the next five days, the students will be visiting each of the five stations set up in the classroom. The instructor may choose to suggest that the students visit one station per day, to ensure that they are spending an equal amount of time gathering information about each region. While the students are working in their stations, the instructor will circulate the room to ensure the students are on task and to answer any questions that the students may have.

Lesson Seven:

The instructor will begin today’s lesson by reading any remaining postcards to the class. The instructor will then pose questions such as “What is something interesting that you learned while researching the different regions of the United States?” The instructor will then bring the students’ attention back to the big question – “Which region in the United States is the best to live in and why?” The instructor will then explain that each student will create a brochure promoting the particular region that the student thinks would be best to live in. If they would like, the students may even choose a specific state in which they would like to live. The students will be asked to include facts such as population and crime rate in their brochures, as well as attractions of the particular region or state. The students will be given three class periods (including today) to work on their brochures. The students will also be asked at this time to submit one question about each of the five U.S. regions for a future activity.

Lessons Eight and Nine:

The students will spend the next two days working on their brochures. While the students are working, the instructor will be again circulating the classroom to ensure students are on task, and answer any questions. The students will be encouraged to bring their brochures home if they feel that they need more time to work on them. They may also use any free time during the day to work on them.

Lesson Ten:

As a culminating activity, the students will play U.S. Regions Jeopardy! The class will be divided into three teams, and each team will be given a buzzer or bell with which to ring in. The Jeopardy! game (on power point) will consist of five different categories, each focusing on one of the five U.S. regions. The questions in each of the categories will be the questions that the students submitted previously. The instructor will run the power point and award points to each team.

Assessment:

Student’s brochures, Jeopardy! questions, and work time will be assessed by rubric attached.
Big Question Rubric

Student’s Name: ________________________________

Chosen Region or State: __________________________

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<tr>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work time (stations)</strong></td>
<td>Student was unable to focus on gathering information, frequently off task</td>
<td>Student was somewhat focused on gathering information, often off task</td>
<td>Student was focused on gathering information, seldom off task</td>
<td>Student was completely focused on gathering information, never off task</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Retrieval Chart</strong></td>
<td>Retrieval chart was barely filled out, more than half of items missing</td>
<td>Retrieval chart was somewhat filled out, missing several items</td>
<td>Retrieval chart was mostly filled out, missing only a few items</td>
<td>Retrieval chart was completely filled out with much detail</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work time (brochure)</strong></td>
<td>Student was unable to focus on completing brochure, frequently off task</td>
<td>Student was somewhat focused on completing brochure, often off task</td>
<td>Student was focused on completing brochure, seldom off task</td>
<td>Student was focused on completing brochure, never off task</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jeopardy! Questions</strong></td>
<td>Student submitted zero or one question(s)</td>
<td>Student submitted two or three questions</td>
<td>Student submitted three of four questions</td>
<td>Student submitted one question about each of the five U.S. regions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brochure</strong></td>
<td>Brochure provided little information, little or no pictures/drawings</td>
<td>Brochure provided incomplete information, few pictures/drawings</td>
<td>Brochure provided much information, included many pictures/drawings</td>
<td>Brochure provided a great deal of information, colorful and included several pictures/drawings of the region or state</td>
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Total Points: __________

Comments:
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