

Learning Objectives

- 1) Know the twelve states that make up the Middle West Region
 - a) **Great Lakes States:** These states border the Great Lakes; they include Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.
 - b) **Plains States:** These states do not border the great Lakes; they include North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri.
- 2) Know about the landforms that cover the Middle West Region.
 - a) **Plains:** The plains of the Middle West are composed of two main areas, The Central Plains (eastern part) and The Great Plains (western part). The Central Plains consist of low and gentle hills. The Great Plains stretch from west of the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. The Great Plains consists of mostly dry grasslands.
 - b) **Bodies of Water:** The Great Lakes border the Middle West to the north. They include Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior (HOMES). Major rivers including the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri serve as borders to some states and provide water to the Plain States.
- 3) Understand that the climate in the Middle West is one of extremes. In the Middle West, winters are cold and the summers are hot and humid. Because there are no mountains to stop them, winds blow hot air in the summer and cold air in the winter. Also, there are no nearby oceans to moderate the temperatures. However, the Great Lakes are so large that they act like oceans. The states that border the Great Lakes get some of the same effects they would get if they bordered an ocean: Cool air comes off the lakes in the summer and warm air comes off the lakes in the winter. This "Lake Effect" causes the climate to be milder in areas near the Great Lakes than in other parts of the Middle West. Most places on the Central Plains receive a lot of rain (about 20-40 inches a year), but the Great Plains receive much less rain (less than 20 inches a year). The Middle West is known for its weather problems. For example, the Great Plains can experience destructive droughts in the summer and dangerous blizzards in the winter. Unfortunately, tornadoes, which have the strongest winds in the world, are very common in the Middle West.
- 4) Know about the natural resources that the Midwest supports.
 - a) **Soil/Crops:** The soil in the Middle West region is very fertile, and it can nourish a wide variety of crops. In the Central Plains corn is the major crop. Iowa, Illinois, and Nebraska are the leading corn producers. Most of the corn is used to feed livestock. However, some of it is used for human consumption; breakfast cereals, margarine, and syrup are produced from corn. Non-food items like paper goods, paints, and fuels are also made from corn. Wheat is the major crop of the Great Plains. It requires less fertile soil and less water than corn. North Dakota and Kansas are the leading wheat producers. Much of the wheat is used to produce flour, which is the main ingredient in bread, many cereals, and pasta.
 - b) **Cattle:** Ranchers in Mexico, Texas, and the southern Great Plains States herded their cattle to the growing railroads in the Middle West to be shipped to the meatpacking plants on the East Coast. Stockyards were built near the railroads to hold the cattle before they were shipped. Dairy cows are raised in the Middle West. Their milk is used for drinking and to produce cheese and butter.
 - c) **Lumber:** The Plains states have few forests. However, large forests cover much of Northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The trees are harvested and turned into paper products and furniture.
 - d) **Mined Materials:** Gold and uranium are mined in South Dakota, Missouri is a leading producer of

lead, and Indiana is famous for its limestone. The Mesabi Range in Minnesota has rich deposits of iron ore. In a process called "open pit mining" iron ore is removed from the ground with huge power shovels; then it is melted and combined with oxygen to form steel. Steel is used to make automobiles, trains, bridges, and skyscrapers.

- 5) Understand that efficient transportation systems are needed to transport resources from the Middle West to the rest of the country and throughout the world. The Great Lakes are part of a very important waterway that leads to the east coast of the United States. The St. Lawrence Seaway and the New York State Barge Canal allow ships to travel from Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean. The Mississippi River is major route from the Middle West to the Gulf of Mexico.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Have students work in groups to prepare a creative extension to any one of the topics covered in the video. For example, students who choose climate might build a model of farmland that requires irrigation due to dry weather. Students who choose natural resources may want to present the class with examples and explain their importance (i.e. iron, lumber etc.).
- 2) Have students work alone or in groups to plan a trip to the Middle West Region. Students should research airfare, transportation, etc. Ask students to prepare a budget and itinerary for their trip.

