

# *In the Mountains*

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Big Ideas: The Culture of the Mountain State

Essential Question: Can creating a 3D map of West Virginia and reading fictional texts help us understand how the culture was created by those who lived in the mountains?

## **Social Studies Standards**

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SS.K.11 compare and contrast the ways humans adapt based on seasons and weather.

SS.K.16 investigate the past and explore the differences in other people, time and cultures through stories of people, heroes, pictures, songs, holidays, customs, traditions or legends.

SS.K.19 identify the shape of West Virginia.

SS.K.22 compare and contrast past and present lifestyles of West Virginians.

## **English/Language Arts Standards**

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ELA.K.W.C11.1. participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore several books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).

## **Visual Arts Standards**

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VA.O.K.5.01. discuss the work that artists do by viewing or visiting displayed artwork, e.g., slides, museums, internet sites, digital media.

## **Exercise Part 1**

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Ask students, "Could you draw the shape of West Virginia on a piece of paper and also shadow in where the mountain ranges are?" This exercise is a pre-assessment for the teacher as well as for the student. Ask students to share their drawings. An alternative assignment would be to pass out an outline of our state. Teacher can determine who recognizes the shape. Then ask students to draw small triangles to represent mountains.

Briefly explain to students that our state, West Virginia, used to be joined to Virginia. Illustrate this on a map. A natural way to split the state is the Appalachian Mountains. A long time ago the mountains were hard to navigate across. Again, point to these mountains on the map on the eastern side of the state. Give each child a laminated piece of paper that has the shape of West Virginia on it as well as large clump of dough. Students create the shape out of dough directly on the laminated piece of paper. Model how to create mountains by rolling the balls and then adding some points and pressing them into the dough. Show a map of West Virginia with the mountains highlighted. Ask students to find where they live on the map and Charleston. Students may know of other popular West Virginia places such as New River Gorge, etc. Take some time to explore these places. Put their sculptures somewhere to dry for a day or two.

### **Exercise Part 2**

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Show the cover of the book *My Great-Aunt Arizona* by Gloria Houston (a substitute story would be *When I was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant. The stories are very similar and provide equal support for the objective of this lesson). This true story tells the life of Arizona Houston Hughes who dreamed of leaving the mountains. She became a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse and inspired many children through the years. She never did travel to any of her dream destinations. This lesson jumps off from the lesson "Wants and Needs" as she was born in the mountains in a log cabin. This first reading should be read straight through with minimal disruptions. After reading, bring up the map of West Virginia again or use their sculptures to illustrate. Explain that even though Arizona did not live in West Virginia she lived in the same mountain chain in North Carolina.

Why would living in these mountains make it hard to travel or go somewhere? Guide students' thinking that because of the mountains there were not many roads in and out. The mountains made it easy to "isolate" people. Help students understand that to isolate something means to keep something or someone by themselves away from other things or people. People that lived in the mountains were separated or isolated from other people. The mountains make it difficult for people to travel from where they live. "Why would Arizona dream of leaving the mountains?" "Based on the sculpture and map, do you think there are many people that live in the mountains?" "Explain to students that they will now observe some historic photographs of real early homes and families.

### **Exercise Part 3**

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Review that Arizona taught in a one-room schoolhouse or a "blab school." Show a few of the photos from the time period:



Ask students what they like to do when they get home from school or on weekends. Create a list on a chart. Then re-read *My Great-Aunt Arizona*. This time, ask students to pay attention to what activities or hobbies Arizona did as a child. Explain that you will be making a list of what Arizona liked to do for fun while she was a young girl. Stop during the reading to add a chart of the activities Arizona did while living in the mountains.

Some of the activities may be: read, sing, square dance, listen to fiddle music, catch tadpoles, climb mountains, search for plants, make snow cream and butter and help parents collect maple syrup. View the Frontier under K1. Compare Arizona's activities to your students. Are there many similarities? Why couldn't

Arizona go shopping or to the theatre? Guide students thinking that things did not exist except in larger cities. You may want to discuss where the larger cities in West Virginia are located and why (Wheeling, etc.).

What about Arizona's wants and needs? Guide students thinking that when people are isolated, as they are in the mountains, they have to be creative and come up with ways to entertain themselves. Also, because they were so isolated, these activities continued for many years. Today the music and crafts and games are a way to remember their heritage of living in the mountains. Many festivals today celebrate these crafts and music. Explore these on the West Virginia State Museum [website](#).

#### **Exercise Part 4**

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A landscape showcasing how the mountains seem to never end can also help students understand the isolation of the people in West Virginia. This lesson involves both color and how distant objects are usually less complex and lighter. More complex and darker shapes are in the foreground and softer, lighter shapes are in the background. [This link](#) has easily adaptable lesson for students to create their own Appalachian Mountain landscape.

#### **Exercise Materials and a Few Extra Helpful Links**

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Online access to the West Virginia State Museum

*My Great-Aunt Arizona* by Gloria Houston or *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant

A book or books about early settlers or life on the frontier

Markers and chart paper

Laminated outline of West Virginia

Enough dough for each students to make 3D map of West Virginia

[A close read from Achieve the Core on \*My Great-Aunt Arizona\*](#)

[Will Matrimmatoe](#): Learn How to Play Appalachian Children's games

[Art Lesson](#): How to make Salt Dough