

Colorful Colorado:

The People, The History, The Stories



Lesson 1



Lesson 1

The Land

Grades 6th - 8th

Summary:

Students will learn about Colorado's three main regions by creating labeled maps, connecting each region to music using active listening, and "climbing a 14er" with a movement and math challenge. This lesson blends geography, music, and physical education to build knowledge and engagement.

Essential Question:

How do Colorado's land regions shape the way we experience its geography, music, and outdoor adventures?

Materials Needed:

- Student Packet
- Coloring Utensils
- Computers for Research
- Speakers
- Projection for Quick Facts
- Scissors

Repertoire Selection:

- The Dry and Dusty West - Martin Gilmore
- All the Songs That Nature Sings - Stephen Lias
- The Moldau - Bedřich Smetana

Cross-Curricular Collaborations:

Social Studies Physical Education Literacy Music Visual Art



Map It Out

Activity Description:

Explore the four unique regions of Colorado in this interactive activity where students will learn about what makes each region unique and create their own map of Colorado.

Activity Preparation:

- Map of Colorado in Student Packet
- Coloring utensils
- Projector or students can discover the regions on their own with computers.

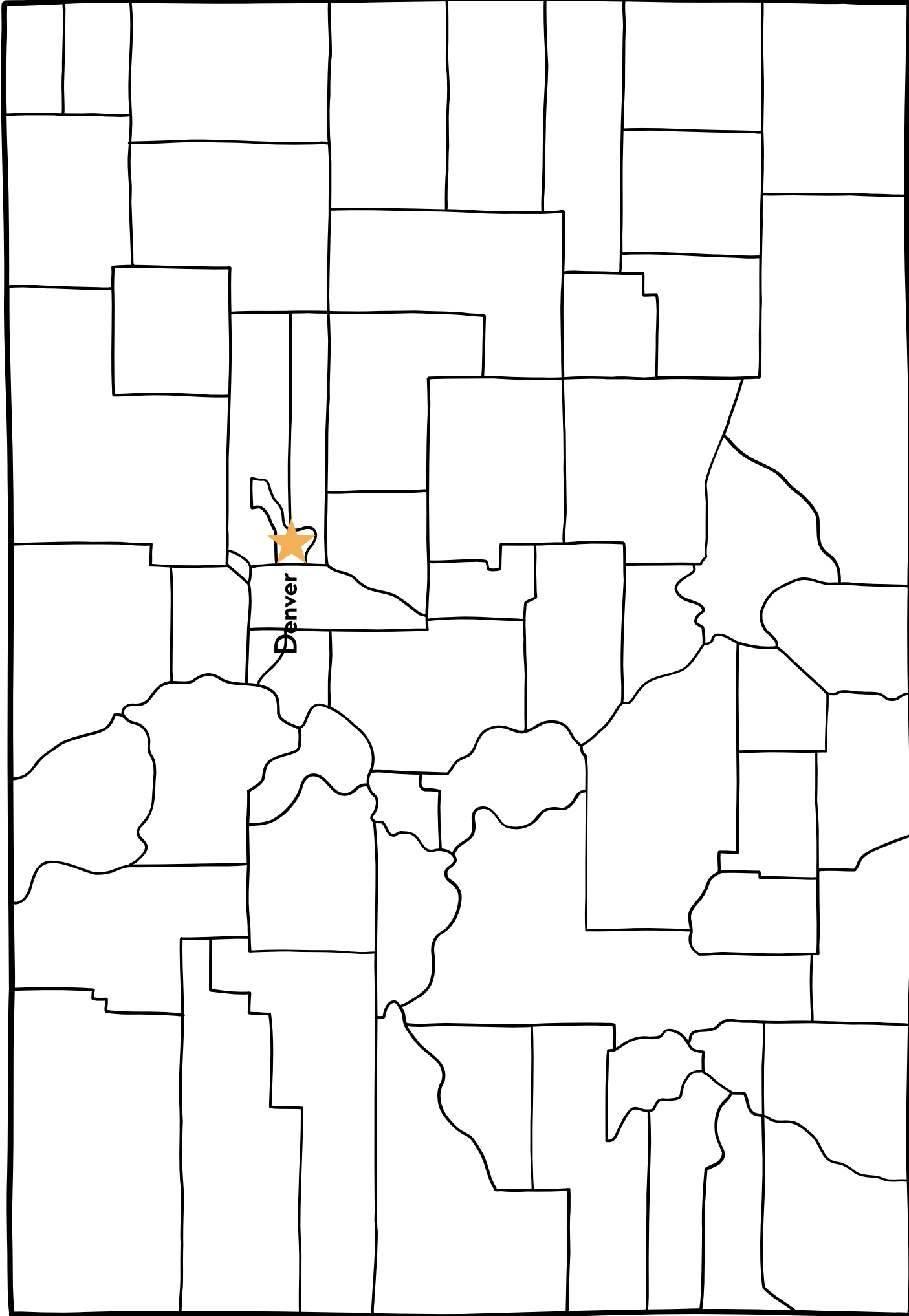
Directions:

- While students are learning about each region, have them place and label the following on the map of Colorado:
 - Lightly color each region
 - National Parks
 - Mesa Verde National Park
 - Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
 - Rocky Mountain National Park
 - Great Sand Dunes National Park
 - Major rivers (Colorado River, Gunnison River, South Platte, etc.)
 - Your city

Discussion/Exit Questions:

What region are you located in?
What region do you like the best and why?

TOP



The Western Slope/Colorado Plateau Region

- The Western Slope region lies just west of the Rocky Mountains.
- The Colorado Plateau is centered around the four corners in southwestern Colorado.
- They are full of plateaus and mesas, deep canyons, and wide valleys.
- These regions are much drier than other regions and is considered a high desert. However, with the Colorado and Gunnison rivers flowing through, it makes it the perfect climate for crops like peaches, apples, and corn.
- Two of the four National Parks are located in these regions and each offer a very unique experience.



- These regions are home to a variety of plants and animals that can live in dry places, like cacti, jackrabbits, coyotes, lizards, and snakes.
- Native American tribes like the Ute and Navajo have lived in this region for thousands of years.
- People visit these regions to explore famous national parks like Mesa Verde, mountain bike, hike and rafting the Colorado River.

Click the links to explore this region

- **The Grand Mesa** is the largest flat top mountain in the world!
- **The Colorado National Monument**
- Sink your teeth into the **Palisade Peach**
- Learn about the beautiful land and history of the Ute tribe at **Ute Mountain Tribal Park**
- Step back to when the Dinosaurs roamed at **Dinosaur National Monument**
- **Yucca House National Park**

National Parks

- [Mesa Verde National Park](#)
- [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)

Music

The Dry and Dusty West
- Martin Gilmore

Listen and Learn

Activity Description:

Meet our friend, Martin Gilmore, and learn about the bluegrass style of music.

Directions:

Listen to Martin Gilmore's introduction video [HERE](#) and listen to his song The Dry and Dusty West to learn about the bluegrass style of music and its history in Colorado. Explore the different instruments in a bluegrass band by clicking each instrument below.

Fiddle



Bass



Mandolin



Banjo



Guitar



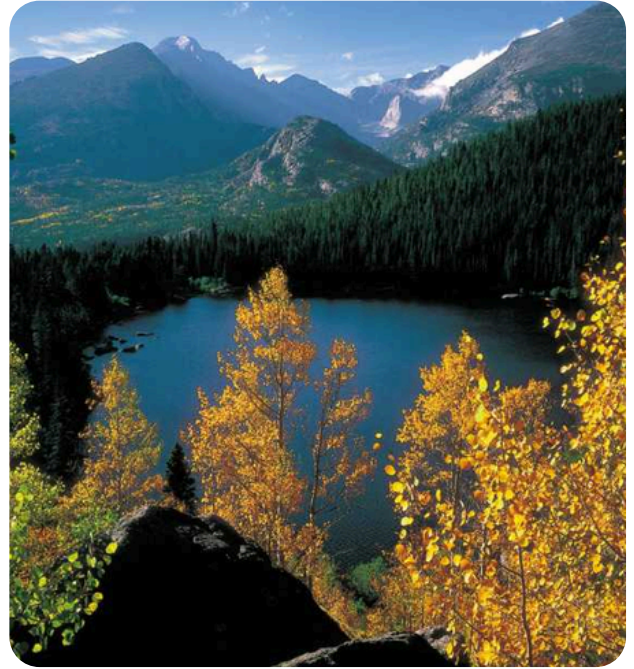
Optional Extension:

Test your knowledge about Colorado singers and bands and their genre of music with this fun Kahoot

[HERE](#)

The Rocky Mountain Region

- The Rocky Mountain region in Colorado is full of tall mountains, deep valleys, and beautiful forests. These mountains were formed millions of years ago when huge pieces of the Earth's crust slowly pushed together, causing the land to rise and form peaks. Glaciers and rivers, such as the Colorado River and Arkansas River, helped carve the land into sharp ridges and wide valleys.
- The Colorado Rockies include some of the highest mountains in the United States, like Mt. Elbert, which is the tallest in Colorado at 14,440 feet!



- This region is home to deer, elk, black bears, bighorn sheep, mountain lions and marmots, among other species. These animals can be found amongst vegetation such as pine trees, aspen trees, and wildflowers.
- Native American tribes like the Ute have lived in the mountains for hundreds of years and still have strong connections to the land.
- Today, many people visit the Colorado Rocky Mountain region to hike, camp, ski, and enjoy the amazing views.

Click the links to explore this region

- Explore the 28 different ski resorts in Colorado - [Colorado Ski Country](#).
- Explore [Pikes Peak](#), the inspiration for the song America the Beautiful and home of the highest cog railroad in the world.
- [Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnel](#) and the Continental Divide.
- Read about the sacred history of the [Indian Hot Springs](#).

National Parks

- [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- [The Great Sand Dunes National Park](#)

Music

[All The Songs That Nature Sings](#)
- [Stephen Lias](#)



Active Listening

Activity Description:

Students will learn quick facts about and listen to Stephen Lias' piece All the Songs That Nature Sings while imagining various landforms around the state of Colorado

Activity Preparation:

- Active Listening Sheets
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks

Music to Play: All the Songs That Nature Sings - Stephen Lias

Directions:

- Cut out the different landforms and discuss what each of them are.
- Click [HERE](#) to listen to this excerpt of All the Songs That Nature Sings by Stephen Lias
- Listen all the way through once without stopping and ask students to be thinking of the different landforms.
- Listen a second time and stop at each time mark.
- Have students glue what landform they hear in each section of the music.
- Have students find a partner to compare and contrast their worksheets.

Quick Facts:

- This piece was commissioned by the Boulder Philharmonic and was completed in January of 2017.
- The piece is about Rocky Mountain National Park and was supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.
- It premiered both in Boulder and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in March of 2017.
- Stephen Lias' inspiration for both the piece and the title came from the following transcript:

"The trail is the short Northwest passage to nature's wonderland. With all its curves and windings it is essentially poetic; it knows the beauty of flowing lines; it is ever in the midst of those things that charm and cheer. It seeks out all the beauty spots and, like a great character, finds only that which is the best. We think of it accompanying the clear and fern-fringed brooks, and in the imagination follow it through mountain passes, curving along narrow vistas across which fall the shadows of the pines. We know it will frequently feel the rapture of silent scenes and often go close to the wild cataracts that leap in glory; at all times it is enlivened with the melody of the wild, ever charmed with echoes far and dim, ever bathed in the aroma of the wilderness, and it is in the heart of all the songs that nature sings."

From "The Rocky Mountain National Park" (1924) by Enos Mills



Active Listening

Listen to Stephen Lias' All the Songs that Nature Sings and answer the following questions.

Write down three instruments you hear when listening?

1

2

3

What is the mood of the music?

Does the tempo change? If yes, how?

What kind of dynamics do you hear?

Draw or write what the music makes you see or feel.

If you were to write the music for Rocky Mountain National Park, how would it sound different?



Summit A 14er

Activity Description:

Students can experience what it is like to hike a 14er in the comfort of their own schoolgrounds.

Activity Preparation:

- This activity is best performed on a school track but can be completed anywhere outside (even around the school building.)
- You can complete this in one day or multiple days.
- Students will need their Summit A 14er worksheet and a pencil.

Directions:

- Head to the track and walk or run 7 laps in order to summit one of the highest peaks in Colorado.
- You begin your summit at a mile high, 5,280 ft.
- Each lap around the track is approximately 1320 ft.
- For each lap, add 1320 to the total elevation until you reach the summit. The summit is 14,520 ft.
- Have students label where Mt. Harvard is located on their map of Colorado.
- Take a class picture!

Discussion Question:

- Has anyone in this class hiked a 14er? Does anyone go hiking?
- What do you like about hiking?
- What are ways we can help keep our trails and our forests safe so everyone can enjoy them?

Summit A 14er

Directions:

- Head to the track and walk or run 7 laps in order to summit one of the highest peaks in Colorado.
- You will begin your summit at a mile high, 5,280 ft.
- Each lap around the track is approximately 1320 ft.
- For each lap, add 1320 to the total elevation until you reach the summit.
- On your map of Colorado, label where Mt. Harvard is located.

Lap	Elevation Gained (ft)	Total Elevation (ft)	Notes:
		5280	Begin at the mile high city: Denver (5280 ft)
1	1320		Did you know there are 58 14ers in Colorado?
2	1320		Keep Climbing!
3	1320		Tree line is at 12,000 ft. How close are you to that? Write your answer here: _____
4	1320		The oxygen level here is about 14.3% compared to sea level which is approximately 21%.
5	1320		Keep Climbing!
6	1320		Mountain goats can live in elevations from 5,000 ft up to 13,000 ft!
7	1320	<u>Grand Total:</u>	Congratulations! You just reached the summit of Mt. Harvard, the 3 rd highest peak in Colorado.

The Plains Region

- The Great Plains region covers the eastern third of Colorado and is quite different from the mountains most people think when they picture Colorado. This area is mostly flat with gently rolling hills, and it stretches for miles with wide-open spaces and high skies.
- This region used to be covered in tall grasses and was home to animals like bison (buffalo), prairie dogs, and antelope. Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes lived here and followed the bison herd for food, clothing, and shelter.



- Today, much of the land is used for farming and ranching. Farmers grow crops like corn, wheat, and sunflowers, and ranchers raise cattle and sheep.
- Because there aren't many trees, the wind can blow hard across the plains, and the weather can change quickly resulting in blizzards and tornadoes!

Click the links to explore this region

- Explore the history of the [Pawnee National Grasslands](#)
- Visit [Jackson Lake State Park](#), an International Dark Skies Park
- Walk in actual dinosaur tracks at the [Picket Wire Canyonlands](#)
- Tastes the sweetness of [Rocky Ford Melons](#)

Music

The Moldau
- Bedřich Smetana



Water Music Composition

Activity Description:

Create your own short piece of music inspired by the water in Colorado! Use sounds, rhythms, and instruments (or found objects) to show how water moves and sounds.

Activity Preparation:

- This activity can either use body percussion (snapping, clapping, tapping, stomping, whistling, etc.) to create water effects, or you can have students use actual water and items to create various water sounds.
- If choosing to use real water, please show students this [VIDEO](#) and have them bring one item from home that will be used in the composition activity.
- Have some extra items for students that forget or have them use their hands!

Discussion Questions:

What does water sound like? (rain, rivers, drips, splashes)
How does water move? (fast, slow, smooth, crashing, bubbling)

Directions:

- Students can be broken up into various group sizes or you can complete a composition with the entire class.
- Based on what each student is playing or using, create a unique symbol to be used for the composition.
- Begin by determining what type of water body or water activity they are trying to mimic.
- Give students time to discover their water instrument.
- Students will then create a 30 second to 1 minute composition with their instruments.
- Have them write their unique symbols on a staff paper to show when and how long each instrument plays. Students can also add rhythms and other musical symbols (dynamics, tempo changes, etc.) if time.
- Have each group perform their composition for the class and explain what they were trying to mimic.

Lesson Extension - Class Debate

The Colorado River supplies water to multiple states, people, crops and animals. Should states get equal rights to its water or should states with larger populations get more water? Should the Colorado River be managed mainly for human needs, or should protecting the environment and wildlife come first?

Helpful Links: [Colorado River District](#) [The Nature Conservancy](#) [The American Nile](#)