

# Making Geography Come Alive for Elementary Students

By Doris Reile

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world." Most Seventh-day Adventist children in the United States learn this song. But as the years go by, do they really learn in what country these children live, how their country looks, what these people are like, what are the important landmarks of their country, or how their land is changing? These are the five basic elements of geography. Every Adventist student needs to learn these facts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world church. If we accept the commission of the angel in Revelation 14:6 to "proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people," then we must do our best to help our children become leaders in the field of geography. If they understand other nations and peoples, they will be better prepared and more willing to become missionaries, to continue the work of those who sacrificed so much before them. The classroom teacher has a duty to instill this sense of responsibility by making geography more appealing.

Most adults remember geography as a boring recitation of names difficult to pronounce and impossible to spell, in places they would never be able to visit. This has changed. Now we read about events in the newspaper, see them on television, and—with modern transportation—can even travel to the lands where news occurs. With this broader experience of the world comes the responsibility of making geography come alive for students in our schools.

## Techniques

Many techniques can enhance the

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teaching and learning of geography. Teachers can select the ones that fit their personal teaching style and available resources. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that an enthusiastic teacher produces enthusiastic students.

## Textbook

Probably the most important element in teaching any subject is a good textbook. This is especially true in geography. Teachers' suggestions can aid local curriculum committees in choosing superior quality textbooks. Because of the many changing elements in geography, schools must use the most recent edition of any book chosen. The textbook should include the five basic themes of geography:

- Location:* Position on the earth's surface
- Place:* Physical and human characteristics
- Relationships within places:* Humans and environments
- Movement:* Humans interacting on the earth
- Regions:* How they form and change?

## Resource Books

The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* and Adventist history books provide much information of historical value to help you incorporate Adventism into geography lessons. The *SDA Yearbook* provides names and addresses of missionaries with whom students can correspond. Pupils will find it rewarding to study the entrance of Adventism into the countries they study in social studies. Frequently they will discover that the geography of the country either aided or hindered the spread of the gospel in that area.

Current encyclopedias, atlases, globes, wall maps, almanacs, and other resource books provide up-to-date information and help teach map and research skills.

The ability to use maps is a prerequisite for geography comprehension. Most libraries stock a number of resource and skills books suitable for various age levels. These can usually be checked out on a teacher's card for an extended time.

## Periodicals

The *Adventist Review*, *Mission*, and *Junior Mission* are excellent sources of mission stories. They also help explain the geography of the lands where their events occur. These are readily available from local churches and can be filed as a classroom resource.

An informative Christian weekly newspaper, "God's World," is available on different levels for grades K-8 and serves as an excellent weekly update on world happenings and human-interest stories. Occasionally the materials contain doctrinal problems,

but these are easily recognizable.

The *National Geographic* is a must for all upper-grade classrooms. Often people in the community will donate old issues. These can be placed in a reference library. If you obtain duplicate copies, pictures can be used for bulletin boards and student projects.

The new *1888-1988 Index*, available from the National Geographic Society, will help your students locate the various topics that the magazine has covered over the years. The magazine inserts provide excellent display maps for unit study.

### **Audiovisuals**

The Adventist Church has three excellent audio-visual resources that help to unite the world of geography to the realm of Adventism. These are *Mission Spotlight*, *Hall of Faith*, and the *Adventure Series*. Some of these programs have been compiled into Adventist Mission Geography sets with teacher's guides. Each school or church should have a library of these slides and filmstrips, which enhance both geography lessons and church services. Local conference education departments often stock these for classroom use.

Local public libraries frequently make available a wide selection of videos and 16mm films. Usually these must be ordered in advance, but can be obtained by schools for a small mailing fee. Many college libraries provide similar film rental programs.

Local public broadcasting station programs are available to schools for a yearly fee. Parochial schools can usually rent them for reduced rates because of their small enrollment.

Many suppliers such as the National Geographic Society have an excellent listing of filmstrips, films, and videos. Write or call to request their catalogues. (See Resource List at the end of the article.)

### **Computers**

Since most classrooms have a computer (or access to one) geography related software and games are an excellent means to inspire students. Some computer programs are designed for groups, while others are adaptable to the skill levels of the individual student. Such programs are excellent resources for small classrooms with only a few students to a grade.

### **Other Suggestions**

Displaying maps on the overhead projector while students study identical desk maps can be very effective. The overhead transparencies can be purchased, but are very easy to make.

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Creating individualized maps will help you focus on exactly the area your class is studying. Finding places on these maps will help students adapt to large-scale maps.

To inspire additional map study and atlas usage you can create a game called, "Where in the World?" Photocopy a tiny area of a map and ask the students to locate the country where it is located. This activity can easily be adjusted for difficulty, depending on the grade level and the areas you

choose. The activity works well as an opportunity for students to earn bonus points, or for use in a learning center.

The "Global Pursuit" game from the National Geographic Society offers a source for geography trivia. This game not only challenges those with a high interest in geography, but also stimulates those who are just developing their skills. "Global Pursuit" provides an excellent study source for the classroom geography quiz sponsored by National Geographic (see story on page 18).

A show-and-tell session allows students to display items made in various countries. The students can plot on a map where these and other of your country's imports originate. Another show-and-tell activity could center around a recent vacation the student or a relative has taken. If a discussion is conducted after the area has been discussed in class, this will help to rein-

force geographic concepts in the students' minds.

Geography is an excellent springboard for interesting hobbies. Having a pen pal in another country can help students get involved in collecting items such as stamps, post-cards, or coins. To nurture such interest, invite local collectors of these items to show their collections to the students.

Long-distance travelers and returned missionaries can be a source of fascinating knowledge for your students. Foreign exchange students and student missionaries are especially effective because they identify well with elementary and junior high students.

Usually such travelers are happy to share their experiences. Their contributions will be especially effective if they deal with the country currently being discussed in class. Usually it is best to invite these persons to class at the end of the unit of study, after stu-

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dents have gained some knowledge of the area and can better relate to the speaker's discussion.

Local amateur radio operators are usually willing to make foreign contacts to which students can listen. This may also serve to interest youngsters in the hobby of amateur radio, which is a real help in the mission field and disaster relief.

However, the most important part of making geography come alive for students depends on the teacher. If the

teacher is committed to staying abreast of world happenings, students will also be interested in the world around them. A current events period each morning offers an opportunity for students to share news items they have heard or read about. Areas mentioned should always be located on a map so students can relate them to familiar locations.

Displays of pictures on bulletin boards can pique students' curiosity and interest in geography. Pictures can be clipped from extra *National Geographic* magazines or collected from calendars (calendar salesmen are good sources for samples). Glass display cases can increase interest in geography. You can request items for display from parents and other community members who have emigrated from or traveled to other countries.

### **Integrating Geography Into the Curriculum**

Geography can easily be integrated into every subject in the classroom. Handwriting might include letters to missionaries or embassies.<sup>3</sup> Each spelling lesson can contain some familiar names from the current geography unit. Bible class provides an excellent time for map study, comparing the topography and political divisions of Bible times and present-day maps. A study of geography can help students to better understand the life and times of Bible characters (see article on page 32).

Geography can also encourage students to read books, magazines, and newspapers at home. Give students an individual world map and ask them to mark each country they read about during the school year. This will encourage them to search for articles on lesser-known parts of the world.

Fine arts provides a time when students can learn the musical styles of other countries, as they listen to tapes or records and learn folk songs. Missionaries may be able to provide a favorite religious song from the area where they served.

Art can be the most fun for making geography connections, but this requires research by the teacher. Nearby libraries will probably stock books illustrating crafts from around the world. These can be copied or adapted to use available materials.

Clay and papier-mâché are wonderful and inexpensive media for studying the geographical features of the earth.

Language study is tailor-made for integration with geography. Even if your school cannot implement a full-scale foreign language program, the students can learn a few words in sev-

eral languages. Local teachers of Spanish, French, or Japanese are good resource persons to use in this area.

All of the ideas mentioned above can be utilized in various ways for Home and School meetings and church activities. Students can display their crafts and the letters they have received from missionaries, read poems or pray in a foreign language, serve international dishes, and give speeches about their classwork in geography.

### Parent-Church Involvement

Geography provides the school with some excellent sources of enjoyable activities and fund raisers. The students will enjoy preparing authentic foods from the countries they study. They can prepare by fixing the foods for themselves, and then plan a dinner when they invite parents and other church members. They could also decorate the school gymnasium and dress in authentic clothing of the lands they are studying. The dinner could serve as a time to honor parents or other community members, or it may be planned as a fund raiser.

Another exciting evening could be planned around an international theme. Assign groups of one or more students to research a nation of their choice, dress in typical local costume, and decorate a booth in a style matching that of the ethnic peoples of the country they have selected. Students could borrow souvenirs from around the world to display in their booths. If the booths are used for a school fair, students could sell handmade artifacts or food native to the culture that their booth represents.

### Conclusion

The creative teacher is always open to new ideas—asking questions, listening for opportunities. It takes effort to plan, to coordinate plans for all the grades, and to keep students on task. To be effective, you must pause often and assess your teaching. Is it effective? Is it interesting? Does it stimulate students to further study? Does it relate to real-life situations? Not all ideas work with every student, nor with all teachers. You must feel comfortable with each activity in the curriculum. You must communicate a sense of excitement about each subject if you want your students to react with enthusiasm. If you feel inadequate about teaching geography, consider taking summer courses in the subject. A college teacher may provide the stimulus to inspire you to incorporate new ideas in your teaching. If at

*Continued on page 46*

# The 'King of the World' Lives in Kansas

By John Treolo

*The odds were stacked against him, but through hard work and trust in the Lord, Jack Staddon achieved his "impossible" goal of winning the first Geography Bee sponsored by the National Geographic Society.*

**W**hat are the chances of a 15-year-old Seventh-day Adventist eighth-grader attending a one-room school with five other students in Great Bend, Kansas, competing against one million other 4th to 8th graders representing

more than 20,000 schools throughout the United States, and winning the first annual National Geographic Society Bee?

Professional oddsmakers in Las Vegas would probably list the odds at a million to one, or perhaps even higher!

Jack Staddon just happens to be

<sup>3</sup> H. I. Dunton, "Northern Europe-West Africa Division Report," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 42:1 (October-November 1979), p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Hans, *Comparative Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1961), p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Earl Hopper, "A Typology for the Classification of Educational System," in Karabel and Halsey, pp. 154, 155.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Dunton, pp. 35, 36.

<sup>9</sup> W. J. McHenry, "Southern Asia Division Report," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 42:3 (February-March 1980), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> I. L. Kandel, *Comparative Education* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Unpublished essay by Larry D. Mahlum, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974).

<sup>14</sup> Gail Kelly and Philip G. Altbach, *Education and Colonialism* (New York: Longman, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> Hans, p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> Max Eckstein and Harold J. Noah, *Scientific Investigation in Comparative Education* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 352.

<sup>18</sup> Read for example, William B. Ball, "Bureaucracy Versus Religion: The Growing Threat," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 42:1 (October-November 1979), pp. 5-7, 41, 42.

## THE 'KING OF THE WORLD' LIVES IN KANSAS

*Continued from page 20*

hosted a banquet for all the contestants, their teachers and families. Since the banquet was originally scheduled for 8 p.m., Jack's father telephoned the society's headquarters and explained that as Seventh-day Adventists, the time after Friday sunset is a special time for them to spend as a family with God. The banquet was moved up a few hours to 6 p.m.

### Great Bend Welcomes Jack

Great Bend Mayor George Drake, along with teacher Reile, hosted a welcome-home event for Jack. A standing-room-only crowd of about 75 turned out at the school to honor the newly crowned geography champ. Before presenting Jack with a certificate from the city, Mayor Drake said he was glad geography is being emphasized.

With all the attention Jack has received, he is still the humble, good-natured youngster who enjoys playing his cello and collecting stamps. For those who may question the competition aspect, Jack has these words:

"Competition is not bad if it's handled in the right way. At the bee it was a good feeling between the others

because throughout the sponsors were stressing that we were all winners. I was praying for me as well as for the other contestants." □

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*Adapted by permission from the Mid-America Union Conference Outlook, August 1989.*

## MAKING GEOGRAPHY COME ALIVE FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

*Continued from page 18*

all possible, travel to interesting places so that you can share firsthand experiences with your students.

How rewarding it would be if you received a letter from a former student in the mission field saying, "It's because of you that I am here." Even more rewarding would be the knowledge that some of those you meet in heaven are there because of your inspiration.

The gospel commission commands us to "Go...teach all nations." To truly fulfill this commission we must make geography come alive in our classrooms. □

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## RESOURCE MATERIALS

There are numerous sources of materials that are helpful in teaching geography. Write or call for catalogues from these suppliers.

### Maps

Rand McNally  
P.O. Box 7600  
Chicago, IL 60680  
800-678-7263

### Map Skill Books

*Weekly Reader Skill Books*  
4343 Equity Drive  
P.O. Box 16607  
Columbus, OH 43272

### Blank Map Outlines

Instructional Fair  
P.O. Box 1650  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501  
800-253-5469

### Newspapers and Magazines

"God's World" Newspaper  
World Publications  
Box 2330  
Asheville, NC 28802  
704-253-8063

National Geographic and World Magazines  
National Geographic Society  
Educational Services  
Washington, DC 20036  
800-368-2728

### Landform Models

NASCO  
901 Janesville Avenue  
Ft. Atkinson, WI 53538  
414-563-2446

### Filmstrips, Slides, and Videos

Mission Spotlight  
4280 Memorial Drive  
Decatur, GA 30032  
404-296-6102

National Geographic Society  
Educational Services  
See address under Newspapers and Magazines

Phoenix/BFA Films and Videos, Inc.  
468 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10016  
212-684-5910

Sunburst Communications  
39 Washington Avenue  
Pleasantville, NY 10570  
800-431-1934

### Computer Courseware

Design Ware Inc.  
Dept. SW1850  
185 Berry St.  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
800-572-7767

Troll  
100 Corporate Drive  
Mahwah, NJ 07430  
800-526-5289

Orange Cherry Software  
P.O. Box 390  
New York, NY 10576  
800-672-6002

K-12 Micromedia  
6 Arrow Road  
Ramsey, NJ 07446  
800-922-0401

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> From *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> National Council for Geographic Education and the Association of American Geographers, *Guidelines for Geographic Education for Elementary and Secondary Schools* (1984), pp. 3-8.

<sup>3</sup> Addresses of embassies in the United States are available from the Washington D.C., tele-