



SHELL  
EDUCATION

# Hands-on History

## Geography ACTIVITIES



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# Introduction

*It was hard to carry water from the bucket to the cup at my desk because my desk was far away, and that's why people wanted to live close to rivers. Also it was easier to work as a group than on your own because you could work together and get free time for art and inventing stuff, and that's why people formed societies.*

—Sixth grade student in Bozeman, Montana

## Benefits of Hands-on Learning

Research is now validating what teachers have known intuitively all along: hands-on learning increases retention and understanding.

Using both history and political science classes, the studies found that students who participated in the role-plays and collaborative exercises did better on subsequent standard evaluations than their traditionally instructed peers (McCarthy and Anderson 2000).

For example, students at a St. Louis middle school experimenting with hands-on learning methods have scored consistently higher on the Stanford Achievement Tests than those in other district schools (Harvey, Sirna, and Houlihan 1998). In other words, once a student has built the Great Wall of China out of salt dough, he or she will remember it forever. By linking learning with experience, we encourage students to remember information as part of this action.

In addition to increasing assessment scores, hands-on learning also increases student motivation. “Tactile learning activities generated positive evaluative attitudes in fifth-grade learners toward geography. These learners did better academically when their competence was measured by content tests” (Blahut and Nicely 1984). Students enjoy hands-on activities, and when students are motivated, they learn.

Though still new to the world of social studies, hands-on learning is not revolutionary in all teaching disciplines. Science teachers use an increasingly hands-on, experimental approach in their teaching.

Jean Piaget (1986) said the following about the need for a shift toward experimental learning in science education:

A sufficient experimental training was believed to have been provided as long as the student had been introduced to the results of past experiments or had been allowed to watch demonstration experiments conducted by his teacher, as though it were possible to sit in rows on a wharf and learn to swim merely by watching grown-up swimmers in the water ... the repetition of past experiments is still a long way from being the best way

of exciting the spirit of invention ...

It is in hopes of exciting the spirit of invention that we offer this book of social studies simulations. More precisely, these simulations and games are designed to excite the spirit of exploration, providing both the experiential basis of knowledge and also the spark of interest so needed to encourage further study. For example, while gaining an overview of a historic period through simulated daily life, students may also be competing as small groups to conquer neighboring groups. These games are cool in much the same way that a snowball fight is cool. By making your subject cool you immediately trick students into intellectual excitement and curiosity. For many teachers in the early and middle grades, sparking this excitement in later study is a goal unto itself.

Piaget also says that involvement is the key to intellectual development. Using these games, you will involve all students, each at their differentiated level of ability and each in their preferred method of learning. For example, in the course of an activity, you may split your class into small groups in which one student makes group decisions, another interacts with neighboring groups, other students are delegated to read background material and talk with their partners, while the remaining students work to complete hands-on design and construction projects. These classroom-tested simulations involve all five of your students' senses and allow students to choose the learning styles that are best for them.

The included simulations also offer many opportunities for small group interaction, encouraging a collaborative approach to learning, which is yet another strategy validated by research. "Total reading, language, mathematics, and battery scores indicated that students in the cooperative learning class scored higher than students in the traditional class" (Pratt and Moesner 1990).

Today is an exciting time in social studies education. More and more we are creating authentic experiences for our students, be they through simulations, active learning, or even evaluation of primary source materials. We are coming to respect that it is more powerful for students to walk through the rows of crosses at Arlington National Cemetery than it is to read the words of a historian. We see that exploring African American sheet music of the 1850s as archived by the American Memory Project at the Library of Congress creates a much more personal response to segregation in American history than simply discussing the issue as a class.

We hope this book helps you infuse your classroom with the light of discovery and learning, allows you to add richness to your students' experiences, and helps you show students that history is not dead. Social studies is alive, breathing, and evolving, and not only in a laboratory or research facility, but in your classroom. People today are part of the same culture and the web of history connects us all. Through experiencing and appreciating the goals, struggles, and decisions of past societies, students in your classroom will gain a deeper appreciation for the worldchanging issues facing people today.

## **Geography Information**

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is vital that young Americans know and understand not only where places are located, but why they are there and how the people who live there interact with their environments. These principles form the core of geography education. Statistics have shown for years that American students lag far behind their counterparts in other countries in the area of geographic knowledge.

The activities in this book are divided into three sections: geography skills, physical geography, and cultural geography. These divisions represent the major emphases of geography. While it is important that our students learn to develop and use geography skills, it is just as important that they learn to apply those skills to Earth's natural and human characteristics. Geography is not just about "Where"—it is also about "Why."

The geography skills section introduces your students to the basics of geography. In this section, your students will compare different ways of examining the world. They will learn to identify various land and water forms. They will investigate map components and their purposes. They will study map projections. And, they will find and use latitude and longitude. These skills form the backbone of any geography curriculum and will give your students the capacity and confidence to dive into the world of geography.

The physical geography section leads your students to explore the physical, or natural, world. Physical geography encompasses those parts of Earth that can exist without humans—climate, vegetation, plate tectonics, water, and natural disasters. Your students will investigate how Earth and its physical systems work.

The cultural geography section focuses on human geography—all the aspects of geography concerned with people. A place is defined not only by its physical characteristics but also by its human characteristics. In this section, you will find activities on cultural identity, economics, politics, architecture, and human-environment interaction to pique your students' interest in cultural geography.

The concluding activity (final project) is designed to unify the application of geography skills, understanding of physical geography, and appreciation for aspects of cultural geography. Focus is directed toward one country and asks the students to bring together their academic knowledge and skills in a creative activity to synthesize what has been learned.

## **Arts Integration**

Arts integration helps bring the geography activities in this book to life. Integrating arts into a geography curriculum adds a dimension of creativity and self-expression for students. As Mantione and Smead (2003) note in their work with integrating arts to teach reading comprehension:

The arts require everyone to interact with their whole selves, thereby engendering the intellectual passion we so dearly want for all children. Teaching reading comprehension strategies through the arts is an approach that is an inclusive, multidimensional, passionate experience.

This same experience can be encountered in these geography activities. Whether students are performing raps that explain the causes and effects of human-environment interaction or acting out the consequences of plate tectonics on the physical environment, the activities outlined here access students' innate excitement for learning. The activities included in this book all strive to incorporate several different art forms. A brief description of each art form is included to help the teacher integrate the arts in meaningful ways.

Arts integration also lends itself to Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Below is a chart that illustrates which arts integration activities address which intelligences. All of the activities in this book include numerous stages, and those stages can also be tied to Gardner's intelligences. This chart addresses only the arts component of each activity.

| Multiple Intelligence | Geography Topic  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Logical               | Land and Water Forms; Plate Tectonics; Political Systems; Natural Disasters  |
| Visual                | Map Skills; Economics; Cultural Identity; Latitude and Longitude; Architecture   |
| Spatial               | Land and Water Forms; Political Systems; Natural Disasters   |
| Body/Kinesthetic      | Land and Water Forms; Climate; Plate Tectonics; Global Water Issues  |
| Musical/Rhythmic      | Latitude and Longitude; Vegetation; Human-Environment  |
| Interaction           | Land and Water Forms; Vegetation; Architecture; Natural Disasters; Cultural Identity; Political Systems  |
| Interpersonal         | Map Skills; Latitude and Longitude; Climate; Plate Tectonics; Economics; Human-Environment Interaction; Natural Disasters; Global Water Issues       |
| Naturalist            | The arts components are not specifically for the naturalist learners, but the subject itself, especially physical geography, engages these learners. |

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# Overview of Activities

## **Land and Water Forms (pages 12–16)**

*Fantasy Island*—In this activity, students learn to differentiate land and water features. Students start by labeling blank maps of imaginary lands. Then, they play charades to reinforce their knowledge of land and water forms. Finally, they create their own fantasy islands using these features.

## **Map Components (pages 17–23)**

*Which Way to the Pencil Sharpener?*—In this lesson, students define map components and examine their uses. Students first examine a map of a known area, such as their school, making conclusions about map components. Then, students create maps on their own and use those maps to complete treasure hunts.

## **Map Projections (pages 24–37)**

*Perspective Detectives*—In this activity, students take photographs of familiar objects in unfamiliar ways, analyze photographs taken by other students, and examine several old maps to hypothesize about their purposes and perspectives. Finally, students create maps of their classroom using their unique photographs from the beginning of the activity.

## **Latitude and Longitude (pages 38–55)**

*Grid and Bear It!*—In this activity, students learn to use latitude and longitude to identify absolute location. Students will read a brief introduction, diagram and act out latitude and longitude, play a version of the old game Battleship to reinforce their knowledge, and create books to help them remember the process of finding latitude and longitude.

*Read, Read, Read Your Map*—In this activity, students review the process of finding latitude and longitude of a location by working in pairs, practice finding latitude and longitude by “hunting” for their teacher, and strengthen their knowledge by creating songs about latitude and longitude.

## **Climate (pages 56–70)**

*Weather or Not*—In this lesson, students learn the factors that determine an area’s climate and how to read a climate graph. They use this knowledge to identify major cities based on their climates and create tableaux to demonstrate major climate patterns and how they relate to location.

## **Vegetation (pages 71–80)**

*Growing Pains*—Students investigate the ties between climate patterns and vegetation. They plant crops to reinforce their knowledge and to infer implications

for global hunger. Finally, they create acrostic poems explaining climate patterns and vegetation in their own words.

### **Plate Tectonics (pages 81–85)**

*Rock Your World*—Students investigate four types of plate movement—convergence, divergence, subduction, and faulting—using a puzzle and class readings. Then, students use simple movement to create skits of plate movement and its effects on the physical environment. (This lesson was created by Diana Jordan of Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, Virginia.)

### **Natural Disasters (pages 86–102)**

*There's Trouble Brewin'*—Students identify the causes and effects of various natural disasters and how humans adapt to places susceptible to these events. Students create trading cards of natural disasters and play a game to collect a complete set of cards.

### **Global Water Issues (pages 103–117)**

*Water, Water, Everywhere*—In this activity, students analyze the importance of fresh water to everyday life. Students take a virtual tour of some of the world's water-stressed areas, answer questions about access and availability, and then create news reports.

### **Cultural Identity (pages 118–127)**

*Culture Quest*—In this activity, students explore the factors that determine people's cultural identities. Students compare and contrast languages and religions, after which they create and perform monologues for characters from other cultures.

### **Economics (pages 128–138)**

*Money Makes the World Go 'Round*—In this activity, students analyze the connections between physical geography and the ways that people make money. They research physical and economic characteristics of a country and engage in an auction to draw conclusions about geography and economics.

### **Political Systems (pages 139–150)**

*Who's in Charge?*—In this activity, students investigate the main types of government and compare how power is distributed in each system by experiencing life under each type of system. Then, they create mobiles of the different types of governments.

### **Architecture (pages 151–155)**

*Home Sweet Home*—Students examine photographs on the Web of architecture from around the globe and analyze examples of how architecture reflects the physical geography of a region. Then, they engage in a creative writing activity to synthesize their knowledge.

## **Human-Environment Interaction (pages 156–166)**

*Balancing Act*—Small groups study specific types of human-environment interaction (HEI) and then create raps about the causes and effects of HEI.

## **Final Project (pages 167–173)**

*Countries, They're GRRRRreat!* In this final project, students create cereal boxes advertising the countries of their choice, using principles of advertising art and the skills from this series. Their projects will reflect the physical and cultural geography of their chosen countries.

# Correlation to Standards

## Standards Used in This Product

Shell Education (SEP) is committed to producing educational materials that are research and standards based. In this effort, the company uses the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Standards Compendium. Each year, McREL analyzes state standards and revises the compendium. By following this procedure, McREL produces a general compilation of national standards. Each lesson in this book is based on a McREL standard. Then, the product is correlated to the academic standards of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. You can print a correlation report customized for your state directly from the SEP website at <http://www.seppub.com>. For assistance in printing correlation reports, please contact Customer Service at 1-877-777-3450.

| Lesson Title                       | McREL Geography Standard   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Fantasy Island                     | Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment. (Standard 2)   |
| Which Way to the Pencil Sharpener? | Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies. (Standard 1)  |
| Perspective Detectives             | Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies. (Standard 1)  |
| Grid and Bear It!                  | Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies. (Standard 1); Understands the characteristics and uses of spatial organization of Earth's surface. (Standard 3) |
| Read, Read, Read Your Map          | Understands the characteristics and uses of maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technologies. (Standard 1)  |
| Weather or Not                     | Understands the characteristics of ecosystems on Earth's surface. (Standard 8)   |
| Growing Pains                      | Understands the characteristics of ecosystems on Earth's surface. (Standard 8)   |
| Rock Your World                    | Knows the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface. (Standard 7)  |
| There's                            | Knows the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface.   |

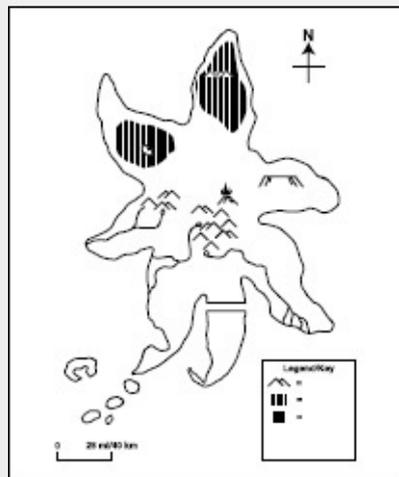
|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Trouble Brewin'                 | (Standard 7)  |
| Water, Water, Everywhere        | Understands the characteristics of ecosystems on Earth's surface. (Standard 8)  |
| Culture Quest                   | Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics. (Standard 10)  |
| Money Makes the World Go 'Round | Understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface. (Standard 11)   |
| Who's in Charge?                | Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface. (Standard 13)                                     |
| Home Sweet Home                 | Understands how physical systems affect human systems. (Standard 15)  |
| Balancing Act                   | Understands how human actions modify the physical environment (Standard 14); Understands how physical systems affect human systems. (Standard 15) |
| Countries, They're GRRRRreat!   | Understands the physical and human characteristics of place. (Standard 4)   |

# Fantasy Island

## Overview

In this activity, students learn to differentiate among various land and water features. Students start by labeling a blank map of an imaginary land, then they play charades to reinforce their knowledge of various land and water forms, and finally they create their own fantasy islands using those various features.

The answer key for student reproducibles is located at the end of the lesson. It is helpful for the teacher to examine such keys before beginning the lesson or distributing any reproducibles to the class. This type of advance inspection will (1) improve teacher understanding and presentation, (2) prepare the teacher for possible alternative student responses, (3) help with classroom time management, and (4) result in optimum focus and effectiveness for the activity.



## Objective

- Students will know the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment.

## Central Question

How do physical features relate to each other?

## Materials

You will need to prepare and/or provide the following:

- *Physical Map of Fantasy Island* (1 per student), [page 14](#)
- overhead transparency of *Physical Map of Fantasy Island*, [page 14](#)

- overhead transparency of *Feature Cards*, [page 15](#)
- class set of *Feature Cards*
- green and blue construction paper (optional)
- blank paper
- crayons, markers, etc.

## Answer Key

*Physical Map of Fantasy Island Key* \_\_\_\_\_ page  
16

## Directions

### Day One

1. Pass out one copy of the *Physical Map of Fantasy Island* to each student, and project the overhead transparency of the *Feature Cards*.
2. Students can use the terms on the *Feature Cards* to label as many features as they can on their maps. As they work, they should add to the map legend. Give them about ten minutes to do this. You may wish to have them use pencils to make corrections easier.
3. Call on volunteers to label the features of the overhead transparency of the island. When your volunteers are finished, help the class fill in any remaining blanks.
4. Answer any questions your students have about the differences between features. For example, students are commonly confused about the difference between a harbor and a bay (a harbor is human-made, while a bay is natural) or between a bay and a gulf (gulfs are larger).

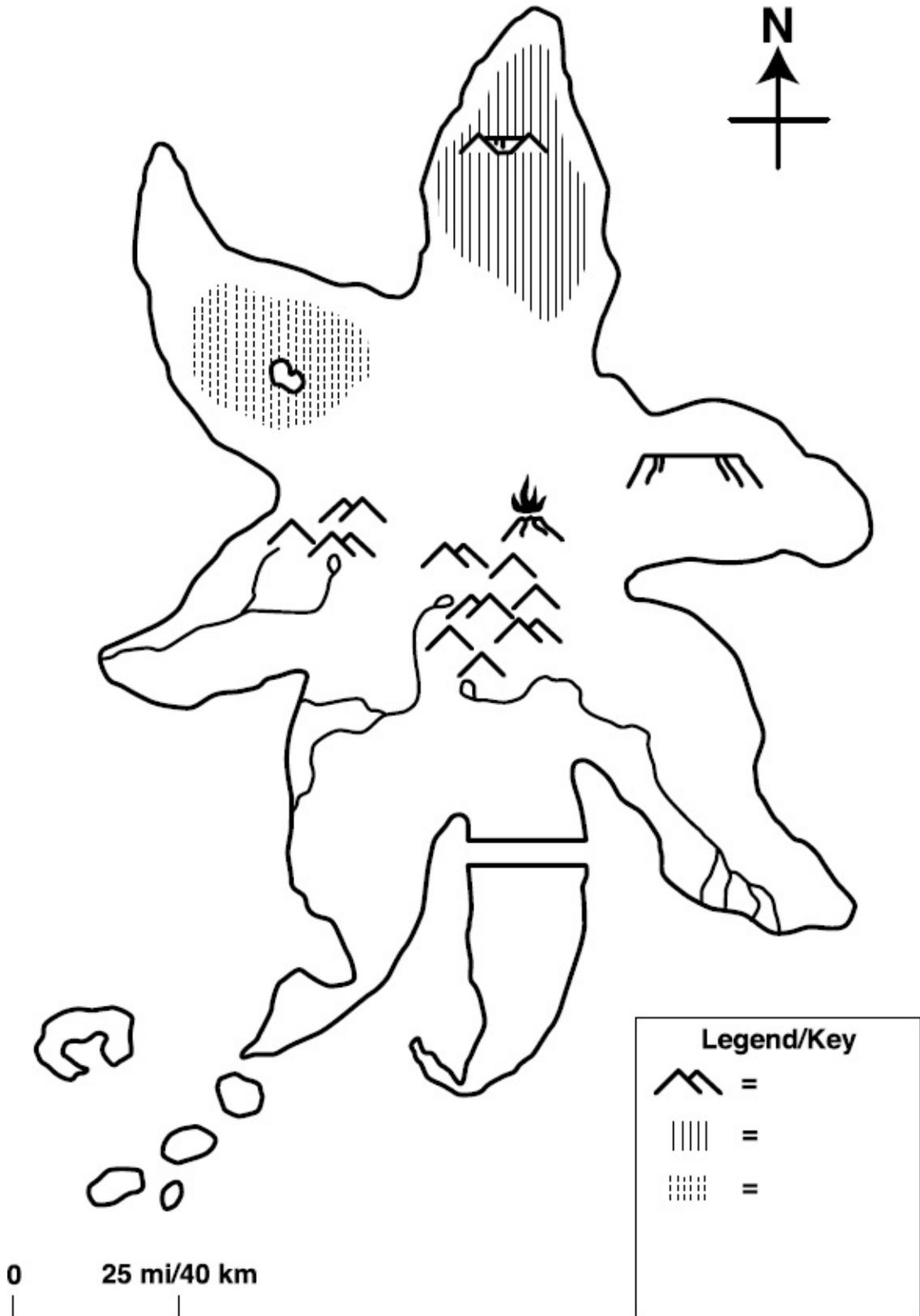
### Day Two

1. Before class, cut out a class set of the *Feature Cards*. (*Optional*: Glue them onto colorcoded construction paper. Use green for land features and blue for water features.)
2. *Arts Integration*: Shuffle the *Feature Cards* and give one to each student. Tell them not to share with their neighbors. Explain the rules of charades to the class (no talking; use only gestures to convey the ideas; hold up fingers for the number of syllables in their features; etc.). Your students will act out the features on their cards, and the rest of the class must guess what features are being represented. They can use their completed *Physical Maps of Fantasy Island* as reference. The student who correctly guesses each feature gets to choose the next player.
3. It may be helpful to your students for you to model charades for them. Keep one

*Feature Card* for yourself so that you can act it out for them.

4. If you choose to use colored-paper backgrounds, have students hold up the backs of their *Feature Cards* before they begin their charades so that the remaining students know whether to focus on land features or water features.
5. Have your students create their own fantasy islands, each incorporating at least ten land and water features. Encourage your students to be creative, but remind them that their features must make sense (e.g., the source of a river must come before any branches).
6. Discuss how their maps illustrate the answer to the central question on [page 12](#).

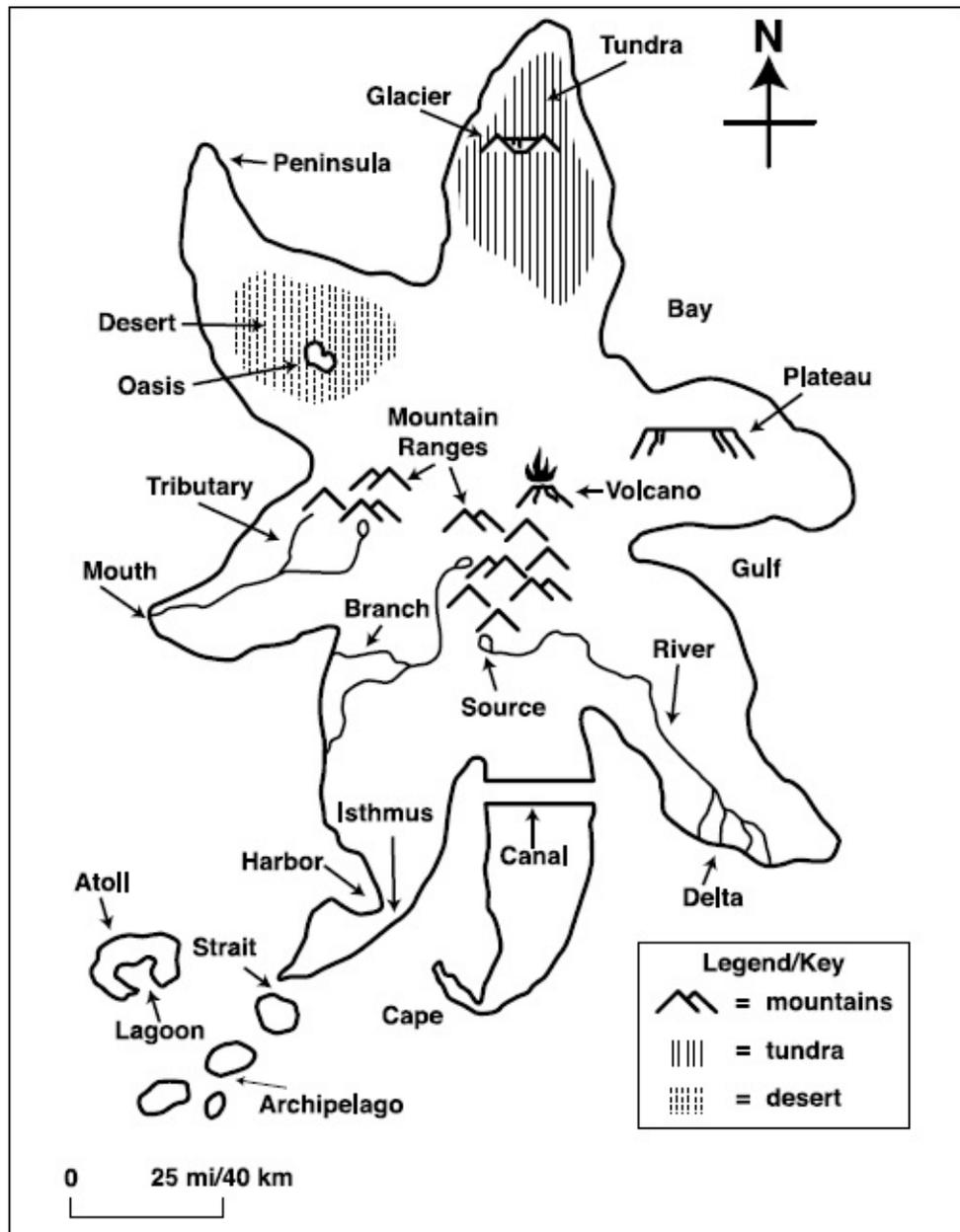
# Physical Map of Fantasy Island



## Feature Cards

|                    |                       |                |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>archipelago</b> | <b>source</b>         | <b>mouth</b>   |
| <b>tributary</b>   | <b>mountain range</b> | <b>isthmus</b> |
| <b>strait</b>      | <b>desert</b>         | <b>oasis</b>   |
| <b>bay</b>         | <b>gulf</b>           | <b>harbor</b>  |
| <b>canal</b>       | <b>tundra</b>         | <b>glacier</b> |
| <b>plateau</b>     | <b>volcano</b>        | <b>delta</b>   |
| <b>peninsula</b>   | <b>cape</b>           | <b>river</b>   |
| <b>atoll</b>       | <b>lagoon</b>         | <b>branch</b>  |

# Physical Map of Fantasy Island Key



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