

# 6B – Colonies

MCCC Unit 6, lesson 4, Colonies

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Network – 2015-6  
Part B of Unit 6 – Political Geography

**GLCEs:** 6G221 Human characteristics, 6G432 Patterns of settlement, 6G433 Migrations; several civics GLCEs

**Note:** For five centuries after about 1450, a handful of small countries claimed large areas on other continents as colonies. The colonizing countries included Portugal, Spain, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and, later, Italy, Germany, and Japan. Their territorial claims covered nearly all of Australia and the Americas, most of Africa, and large parts of Asia. Almost all of the former colonies have gained independence, but the colonial era still has many persistent effects on world geography. Its legacies include patterns of language, religion, trade, and many other cultural traits. Citizens in a democracy need to be able to put these legacies into perspective. The goal in a grade 6 geography class is much more modest – a reasonably accurate mental map of the territorial claims of different colonial powers, and an awareness of some of the major consequences of their rule.

- 1. Review Activity:** What resources attracted explorers and colonists? (2-10 minutes)  
6th 5A World Resources presentation      BI1 World Economic Geology clickable map
- 2. Scaffolding Activities:** The main currents in each ocean. (10 for ppt, 30-40 with activity(s))  
6th 6Bw Global Winds Ocean Currents and Trade      6th 6Bw Global Winds presentation
- 3. Activity:** “The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire” (20-50 depending on depth of questioning)  
Describe the general geographic pattern of the colonies of different European countries. Compare this pattern with maps of cropland, gold, sugar, and other resources. Ask which countries seemed to claim colonies to get specific resources. Compare maps of colonies and identify places in the world where European countries might become involved in conflicts between their colonies (e.g. as France and Britain did in North America, in a conflict that was very important in early American history).  
6th 6B European Colonies map activity      6th 6B European Colonies clickable map  
Readings/videos about colonists
- 4. Supplementary Activity:** Legacies of the colonial era. (10-50 depending on whether students simply discuss the maps or do some research, e.g. with CIA Factbook to get info about languages)  
Compare maps of European colonies with maps or tables of official languages (e.g., in the CIA Factbook or online almanac), identify the official language(s) of a specific country, and decide whether the people there have continued to use a European language or have chosen to go back to the language(s) they had prior to the colonial era. Do a similar comparison of present and prior religion.
- 5. Extension Activity:** Crossing the Andes: the setting for South American War(s) for Independence  
6th 6Bz Crossing the Andes (a YouTube activity, 5-20 minutes)

## Pages from MCCC

**SuppMaterials.SS060604** graphic organizer and word cards; the readings about Tanzania are a good model for a case study, but teachers should feel free to substitute another if it is more meaningful to students in the school, or even if the teacher feels more comfortable using it as an example  
**MCCC SS060604.Powerpoint** world maps about development, HDI, world trade in the colonial era.

**Takehome:** European colonization had many effects on the political, economic, and cultural characteristics of places around the world. To assess these effects, students need a fairly good mental map of the areas that were colonies of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and, later, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States. This Part should help students build this kind of mental map.

**EXTRA:** The new 6<sup>th</sup>-grade GLCEs are clearly better than the old ones, but they still have some embarrassing gaps and overlaps. For example, the new GLCEs do not have a single sentence that deals with the concept of *strategic importance* – the fact that some locations are especially valuable because of their position with respect to coastlines, mountains, rivers, etc. These strategic straits and passes were important in trade and in war. A list of battles fought for control of strategic locations is like a Who’s Who of major turning points in history – e.g., Thermopylae, Constantinople, the Siege of Vienna, Gibraltar, Saratoga, Harpers Ferry, Gettysburg, Stalingrad, Midway Island, Kabul. As a foundation for history classes, students could learn some strategic locations that were important at various times in the past. As a basis for understanding current events, they should learn the location and importance of places like Singapore, the Strait of Hormuz, the Spratly Islands, etc. (15-45 minutes)

6th 6Bx Strategic Straits activity pair      6th 6Bx Strategic Straits clickable map and TG  
6th 6By British Naval Battles presentation      6th 6By British Naval Battles teacher notes