1. South America is the fourth largest continent in area. It is located in the Western Hemisphere, lying southwest of North America. Most of South America lies in the Southern Hemisphere; however, the northern portion lies north of the Equator.

2. The Amazon Basin and the Andes Mountains are two physical features that dominate the continent. The Amazon Basin lies in north central South America and covers an area of over 2 million square miles. The Andes Mountains run north-south along the western edge of the continent. At 4,500 miles in length, the Andes are the longest continental mountain range.

3. There are several major rivers in South America. The longest, the Amazon River, is 4,000 miles in length. It carries more water than any of the world’s rivers. It lies in the Amazon Basin which supports the flora and fauna of a tropical rainforest. Other rivers are the Orinoco River in the north and the Parana River in the south.

4. Much of South America lies in the tropics and has a tropical climate with warm temperatures and abundant rainfall. Exceptions are the southern cone with a cooler, drier climate; portions of the west coast that are dry; and the cooler highlands climate of the high Andes.

5. Most of South America’s population of 373 million lives within 150 miles of the coast. Most of the most major cities are on or near the coast. The interior is sparsely populated because of the dense tropical rainforests, mountains, and desert regions. About 80% of the population lives in urban areas.

6. The Inca and other Amerindians were the indigenous inhabitants of the continent. Today their descendants make up part of the cultural mosaic of South America. The population is multicultural with many people having mixed ancestry of European, African, and Amerindian.

7. Most of South America was colonized by Spain and Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries. Spanish is the official language of most countries; Portuguese is the official language in Brazil. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion. The countries of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana bear the influence of United Kingdom, Netherlands, and France respectively.

8. Oil is an important energy resource in northern South America. Venezuela is a net exporter of oil. Iron ore and bauxite are important minerals in Brazil. Coffee, sugarcane, and citrus fruits are major agricultural crops in several countries.

9. Economic development is uneven throughout the continent. The strongest economies and greatest development is concentrated in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil which have trade with other regions. The poorest regions are through the central Andes. In most countries there is a great disparity between a minority of wealthy and large numbers of people living in poverty.

10. Governments have often been unstable in several countries since independence. Military coups and insurgencies have caused governments to change frequently, thus delaying economic development. Populist leaders in Venezuela and Bolivia have taken an anti-American stance in recent years.

Adapted from Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts by H.J. De Blij and Peter O. Miller.
Regions and Countries of South America

Capital Cities in italics

Map Activity
Locate and label the following countries on an outline map. Label the capital cities.

Brazil
- Brazil Brasilia

The Caribbean North
- Colombia Bogotá
- Venezuela Caracas
- Guyana Georgetown
- Suriname Paramaribo
- French Guiana Cayenne

The West: Andean South America
- Ecuador Quito
- Peru Lima
- Bolivia La Paz and Sucre

The South: Mid-Latitude South America
- Chile Santiago
- Argentina Buenos Aires
- Paraguay Asuncion
- Uruguay Montevideo

Research Questions

1. Use a World Almanac or other resource to research the area and population of each country of South America. Make a chart listing the countries from highest to lowest for each category.

2. Locate the 15 cities with the largest populations in South America. Make a chart listing them from the highest. Locate the cities on a map. What location do many of these cities have in common?
South America’s Place in the World

Location
- Western Hemisphere
- Divided by the Equator - A small portion of the country lies north of the Equator, while most of the continent lies south of the Equator.
- Much of the continent lies in the Tropics.

Land Area
- South America: 6,900,000 square miles (fourth among the continents)
- United States: 3,787,485 square miles

Countries
- South America has 12 countries and 1 colony
- Largest country: Brazil – 3,286,500 square miles
  - Compare with U.S. area - 3,787,485 square miles
- Largest U.S. state: Alaska - 570,374 square miles

Population
- South America: 373,000,000 – more than 90% of the population lies within 150 miles of the coast
- Most populous country: Brazil – 184,200,000
- United States: 308,745,538

Landforms
- Andes Mountains, the longest continental mountain range, extends for more than 4,500 miles along the western edge of South America.
- Amazon Basin, the largest tropical rainforest in the world.
- Patagonia, a dry region in southern Argentina
- Llanos, plains region in the north

Bodies of Water
- Caribbean Sea to the north; Atlantic Ocean to the north and east; Pacific Ocean to the west
- Amazon River, at 4,000 miles, is the second longest in the world. It has a river basin of 2,700,000 square miles. (Compare with Mississippi River basin of 1,150,000 square miles.)

Climate
- Much of the continent has a tropical climate, especially the Amazon Basin.
- Temperate climates are found farther south
- High Andes Mountains have a cold climate
- Deserts along Pacific coast and southern Argentina
Where Do People in South America Live?

In this activity students will examine South America’s population distribution to determine where most of the population is clustered. They will also make a connection between where people live and climate, natural vegetation, and physical features.

Internet Resources
Map of South America Day and Night
http://www.irisentoreopreis.nl/sa_day_night.shtml

Map of South America at Night
http://geology.com/articles/night-satellite/satellite-photo-of-south-america-at-night.jpg

Engage Students
Begin by showing students an image of South America at night. Ask the following questions:
1. What do the heaviest concentrations of light represent?
2. Is there a pattern to the concentrations of light?
3. What does this image tell us about where South America’s largest cities are located?
4. What areas of South America have low population as indicated by few or no lights?

Student Activities
1. Construct a chart of South America’s countries and populations. List them on the chart from highest to lowest population.

2. Construct a chart of South America’s largest cities. List them on the chart from highest to lowest population.

3. Locate these cities on a map. Are most of the cities located near the coast or farther inland?

4. What physical features, climate, and natural vegetation are prevalent in the inland regions of the continent?
Categorize the following terms under the country each describes. Each term can be used *only once* and *only four terms* can be used for each country.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word List</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
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<td>Patagonia</td>
<td>Atacama Desert</td>
<td>Easter Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean Sea</td>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>Atlantic Ocean</td>
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Name ____________________________________________

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- Patagonia
- Atacama Desert
- Easter Island
- Atlantic Ocean
- Caribbean Sea
- Buenos Aires
- llanos
- Santiago
- Sucre
- Isthmus of Panama
- Lake Titicaca
- Angel Falls
- Lake Maracaibo
- Machu Picchu
- Orinoco River
- La Paz
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- Bogotá
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- Amazon River
- Lima
- Altiplano
- Rio de la Plata
- Cusco

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**Venezuela**

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**Bolivia**

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**Peru**

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**Colombia**

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