

Follow land and water · Learning journey

Learning with a grown-up · Ages 4–8 · Flexible participation

How do land, water and growing places connect?

Follow landscapes from landforms and rivers to coasts, then notice growing places and their connections with communities.

Use one chapter at a time over several visits. Open the related notebook page only when it helps the conversation.

Teacher sequence

Mountains, Valleys, Plains & More: Make two land shapes: Identify and compare landforms by their shape and position.

High and low places shape a landscape. Next, follow a river from its source toward the sea.

A River's Journey: Draw a joining river: Trace downstream flow and distinguish source, tributary, bank, meander and mouth.

This river reaches the sea. Next, notice the shapes where land meets water.

Where Land Meets the Sea: Draw two different shores: Distinguish an island and peninsula, and identify a bay and a strait from land-water relationships.

Land and water shape places. Next, look inland at fields, orchards and gardens where people grow crops.

Fields, Orchards and Gardens: Connect a growing place to a community: Match wheat, apples and carrots to three pictured growing places.

A growing place connects with a community by routes. Next, compare different views of one place before turning it into a map.

What to listen for

Can the child indicate the plateau's raised flat top and identify water around the island? Accept gestures before technical terms. Can the child show a joining tributary without tracing away from the main river? Can the child follow the island shore and identify the peninsula's land connection? The child matches at least two crops with the growing places or positions shown and describes one connection.

Mountains, Valleys, Plains & More

Which two landforms look flat? How are they different?

Learning aim: Identify and compare landforms by their shape and position.

A five-minute conversation

Look across the landscape with Olivia. Ask your child to choose a shape that catches their eye, then read its label together.

Start here: Offer two pictured choices and read the definitions aloud.

Explore further: Ask why a plain and plateau can both be flat but are different landforms.

Which two landforms look flat? How are they different?

Answer cue: The plain and plateau both have broad, mostly flat surfaces. The plateau is raised above the land around it. Accept pointing and 'this one is higher.'

Where is the valley? What is on either side?

Answer cue: The valley is the low land between the mountain slopes; the river follows its low floor in this illustration.

What makes this piece of land an island?

Answer cue: Water goes all the way around it. Trace its shore with a finger or gaze.

Keep the idea clear

Real mountains, hills and valleys have many shapes. Snow or a pointed top is not required for a mountain, and there is no single worldwide height boundary between a hill and a mountain. This picture combines examples; it is not a real travel map.

Try: Make two land shapes

Materials: A sheet of scrap paper, or just your hands.

1. Fold or gently scrunch paper into a raised shape, or show one with your hand.
2. Keep another part flat. Decide which part could stand for a hill or plain.
3. Explain one difference. This is a simple model, not an exact-sized landscape.

What this can show: Can the child indicate the plateau's raised flat top and identify water around the island? Accept gestures before technical terms. Share the looking and vocabulary. No trip, cutting or materials purchase is needed.

Return to it: Compare a plain and a plateau: both can be flat, so what else must you notice?

Mountains, Valleys, Plains & More · In the classroom

A 20-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Read the picture and answer cues. Have the optional explorer's notebook available. A sheet of scrap paper, or just your hands.

Words to explore

mountain — Land that rises high above the land around it.

hill — Raised land, usually lower than a mountain.

valley — Low land between hills or mountains.

plain — A wide area of mostly flat land.

plateau — Broad, high land with a mostly flat top.

island — Land with water all around it.

3 min · Notice: Notice: allow one minute for silent looking or pointing.

4 min · Compare: Compare: read plain and plateau, and invite children to show how they differ.

8 min · Try together: Fold or gently scrunch paper into a raised shape, or show one with your hand. Keep another part flat. Decide which part could stand for a hill or plain. Explain one difference. This is a simple model, not an exact-sized landscape.

5 min · Explain: Explain: children select two landforms and give one pictured difference.

Understanding check: Can the child indicate the plateau's raised flat top and identify water around the island? Accept gestures before technical terms.

Answer guidance: The plain and plateau both have broad, mostly flat surfaces. The plateau is raised above the land around it. Accept pointing and 'this one is higher.' The valley is the low land between the mountain slopes; the river follows its low floor in this illustration. Water goes all the way around it. Trace its shore with a finger or gaze.

Describe the position and shape, not only its color; children may point, sign, speak or use eye gaze.

A response to keep

On notebook page 4, sketch or name one landform you want to remember.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/landforms>

Related story: Olivia the Globetrotter stories — Olivia's travel stories invite close looking at a place. This invented teaching landscape adds geography vocabulary; it is not a scene from a particular book.

A River's Journey

Which way does the water go? What helps you tell?

Learning aim: Trace downstream flow and distinguish source, tributary, bank, meander and mouth.

A five-minute conversation

Begin where the river starts. Move a finger or your gaze slowly along the water, letting your child choose where to pause.

Start here: Use 'begins,' 'joins' and 'bend' before introducing the formal words.

Explore further: Ask where a river mouth could be besides the sea, and why downhill does not mean south.

Which way does the water go? What helps you tell?

Answer cue: It travels downhill from the source toward the mouth. Follow the downstream arrows and the descending landscape.

What happens where the smaller stream meets the river?

Answer cue: The tributary joins the main river. Their water continues downstream together.

Can you find a bend and the land beside the water?

Answer cue: A bend is a meander. The land along a river's side is its bank, not the water itself.

Keep the idea clear

This example reaches the sea. Other rivers flow into lakes or other rivers. Rivers may be fed by rain, melting snow and groundwater, and flowing downhill does not mean always flowing south.

Try: Draw a joining river

Materials: Paper and a pencil or crayon.

1. Draw one winding river from high land to a lake or sea.
2. Add a smaller stream joining its side.
3. Add arrows showing the two streams joining and continuing downstream.

What this can show: Can the child show a joining tributary without tracing away from the main river? Use a drawing indoors; this activity does not require visiting water. If your family later visits water, an adult chooses a safe viewpoint and stays with the child.

Return to it: Point to the bank, then the water. Which one is land?

A River's Journey · In the classroom

A 20-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Read the picture and answer cues. Have the optional explorer's notebook available. Paper and a pencil or crayon.

Words to explore

source — Where a river begins.

tributary — A stream or river that joins a larger one.

bank — The land along the side of a river.

meander — A bend in a river.

mouth — Where a river flows into another river, a lake or the sea.

3 min · Notice: Trace: follow the main river from its source to the sea.

4 min · Compare: Join: trace the tributary to its meeting point, then continue along the main river.

8 min · Try together: Draw one winding river from high land to a lake or sea. Add a smaller stream joining its side. Add arrows showing the two streams joining and continuing downstream.

5 min · Explain: Explain: invite children to describe one bend or one bank.

Understanding check: Can the child show a joining tributary without tracing away from the main river?

Answer guidance: It travels downhill from the source toward the mouth. Follow the downstream arrows and the descending landscape. The tributary joins the main river. Their water continues downstream together. A bend is a meander. The land along a river's side is its bank, not the water itself.

Use verbal path descriptions and a shared large print; tracing with gaze is as valid as moving a hand.

A response to keep

On notebook page 4, draw a river flowing from higher land to the sea, with a smaller stream joining it. Add a downstream arrow.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/river-journey>

Related story: Olivia the Globetrotter stories — In Olivia and Doudou in Paris, a boat trip introduces the Seine. This poster is an invented example river, not a map of the Seine or its source.

Where Land Meets the Sea

Which land has water all the way around it?

Learning aim: Distinguish an island and peninsula, and identify a bay and a strait from land-water relationships.

A five-minute conversation

Trace one coastline slowly. Notice when water surrounds land and when land remains connected.

Start here: Begin with island versus connected land; add bay and strait later.

Explore further: Explain how a strait connects larger waters while a peninsula connects to land.

Which land has water all the way around it?

Answer cue: The island. Follow its complete shore without finding a land connection.

How is the peninsula different from the island?

Answer cue: It is still joined to the mainland, while water reaches around most of it.

Which label names narrow water, rather than land?

Answer cue: Strait. The narrow passage connects the larger water areas on its two sides. The bay is water curving into the land.

Keep the idea clear

The museum relief is a model, not a real coast or walking route. A bay can open into a sea or a lake. A strait is water; a peninsula is land. Do not infer depth, safe swimming or scale from the model.

Try: Draw two different shores

Materials: Paper and a pencil or crayon, or use pointing and spoken descriptions.

1. Draw an island with a complete ring of water around it.
2. Draw a second land shape still joined to a larger area of land.
3. Explain why the second one can be a peninsula and the first cannot.

What this can show: Can the child follow the island shore and identify the peninsula's land connection? Stay together and use the picture or an indoor drawing. No trip, purchase, cutting, water access or real address is needed.

Return to it: Cover the labels. Can you still explain which shape is an island and which is a peninsula?

Where Land Meets the Sea · In the classroom

A 20-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Read the picture and answer cues. Have the optional explorer's notebook available. Paper and a pencil or crayon, or use pointing and spoken descriptions.

Words to explore

bay — Water that curves into the land.

peninsula — Land mostly surrounded by water and joined to a larger land area.

island — Land with water all around it.

strait — A narrow stretch of water joining larger bodies of water.

3 min · Notice: Look together: Trace one coastline slowly. Notice when water surrounds land and when land remains connected.

4 min · Compare: Discuss: read one question and invite children to point to the evidence.

8 min · Try together: Draw an island with a complete ring of water around it. Draw a second land shape still joined to a larger area of land. Explain why the second one can be a peninsula and the first cannot.

5 min · Explain: Try and explain: Draw an island with a complete ring of water around it. Draw a second land shape still joined to a larger area of land. Explain why the second one can be a peninsula and the first cannot.

Understanding check: Can the child follow the island shore and identify the peninsula's land connection?

Answer guidance: The island. Follow its complete shore without finding a land connection. It is still joined to the mainland, while water reaches around most of it. Strait. The narrow passage connects the larger water areas on its two sides. The bay is water curving into the land.

Read labels aloud and describe shape and position. Accept speech, signing, pointing or eye gaze; do not rely only on color.

A response to keep

Return to notebook page 2. Trace water around an island. Add a peninsula that stays joined to a larger land shape.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/coast-shapes>

Related story: Olivia the Globetrotter stories — Olivia and Doudou in San Francisco introduces a coastal city and the Golden Gate Bridge. This separate model helps name land-water shapes without claiming to map San Francisco Bay.

Fields, Orchards and Gardens

What crop grows in the field here?

Learning aim: Match wheat, apples and carrots to three pictured growing places.

A five-minute conversation

Follow the path through the growing places. Name the pictured crop, then look closely at where its edible part grows. This is a geography conversation about food-growing landscapes, with three examples rather than a complete food map.

Start here: Match apples to a tree and carrots to the soil cutaway.

Explore further: Compare above-ground and below-ground edible parts, then explain a route between a growing place and a community.

What crop grows in the field here?

Answer cue: Wheat. Its grain develops in the heads at the tops of the stems. The poster calls it a grain crop.

What makes this an apple orchard?

Answer cue: Several apple trees grow together. The apples are attached to branches above the ground.

Which part of the carrot is under the soil?

Answer cue: The orange root. Its green leaves grow above the soil. The cutaway helps us see a part usually hidden underground.

Keep the idea clear

Gardens, fields and orchards can grow different crops in different places. These are examples, not a rule that every crop grows everywhere. Not all food comes from plants. Children should not taste plants or pick crops without a knowledgeable adult's permission.

Try: Connect a growing place to a community

Materials: Paper and crayons, or the child's pretend-place map.

1. Choose wheat, apples or carrots and draw a place where the pictured crop grows.
2. Add a route between that place and a pretend community.
3. Tell how people could move the crop along the route. Keep this a pretend journey, without needing to handle real food.

What this can show: The child matches at least two crops with the growing places or positions shown and describes one connection. No tasting, harvesting, tools or farm visit are required. For a real visit, follow the grower's rules and stay with the grown-up on permitted paths.

Return to it: Return to Cities, Towns, Villages & Countryside. Where might a growing place connect with a settlement?

Fields, Orchards and Gardens · In the classroom

A 15-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Paper and crayons, or the child's pretend-place map. Read the answer cues before sharing.

Words to explore

crop — A plant grown for use, such as food.

grain — The seed of a cereal plant, such as wheat.

field — An area of open land; this field grows wheat.

orchard — A place where fruit or nut trees are grown.

root — The part of a plant that usually grows below the ground.

soil — The loose material at the ground's surface where many plants grow.

3 min · Notice: Look together and name one visible detail before introducing new words.

4 min · Compare: Use the three prompts to connect the pictured evidence with the lesson.

5 min · Try together: Choose wheat, apples or carrots and draw a place where the pictured crop grows. Add a route between that place and a pretend community. Tell how people could move the crop along the route. Keep this a pretend journey, without needing to handle real food.

3 min · Explain: The child matches at least two crops with the growing places or positions shown and describes one connection.

Understanding check: The child matches at least two crops with the growing places or positions shown and describes one connection.

Answer guidance: Wheat. Its grain develops in the heads at the tops of the stems. The poster calls it a grain crop. Several apple trees grow together. The apples are attached to branches above the ground. The orange root. Its green leaves grow above the soil. The cutaway helps us see a part usually hidden underground.

Use enlarged crop details and spoken descriptions. Children may point or choose a picture; no food handling or personal dietary disclosure is needed.

A response to keep

Draw, point or describe one idea from this picture.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/fields-orchards-gardens>

Related story: Olivia and Doudou in Paris — The travel books invite Olivia and Doudou to notice their surroundings. This new countryside scene broadens that habit to growing places; it is not presented as a page from a book.

Our discovery record

Use words, marks, a drawing or an adult's notes. Keep this page with you; nothing needs to be uploaded.

Date / time (if useful): _____

My question or idea

What I noticed

What I think now

What I want to explore next

Stories to continue together: <https://kiddos.ai/books>

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