

The World-Traveling Watermelon

Grade 4 or customize for other grades

Subject: Geography

Objective:

Students should be able to identify continents and read maps, using lines of longitude and latitude.

Materials:

Political world maps and globes

Lesson:

Give a map to each student and globes to groups of students. Tell them you will be discussing how to read a map and globe while following the journey of the watermelon.

Introduction:

Watermelons are thought to have originated in the Kalahari Desert. In 1850, explorer David Livingston found them growing wild in this area in southern Africa. The Kalahari Desert covers 70% of Botswana, and parts of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. The first recorded watermelon harvest occurred nearly 5,000 years ago in Egypt and was depicted in Egyptian hieroglyphics on the walls of their ancient buildings.

1. Explain what the term **continent** means and locate the 7 continents with students. (A continent is one of the 7 largest landmasses on a globe.)

Continents:

North America
South America
Antarctica
Europe
Asia
Africa
Australia

2. Ask students what continent the Kalahari Desert and Egypt are located on. (Answer – Africa)

From Egypt, it is believed the watermelon spread throughout countries along the Mediterranean Sea by way of merchant ships.

3. Ask students what three continents surround the Mediterranean Sea. (Answer – Africa, Europe, Asia)

By the 10th century, watermelon found its way to China.

4. Ask students what continent China is located on. (Answer – Asia)

5. Explain the terms **lines of longitude** and **meridian**. (Lines of longitude run north and south and are called meridians. Zero degrees longitude is an imaginary line called the prime meridian. It passes through Greenwich, England. Half of the lines of longitude are west of the prime meridian and half are east of it.)

Watermelon spread through the rest of Europe via the Moors during the 13th century. There is a funny story about a Roman leader and a watermelon. A watermelon was once thrown at Roman Governor Demosthenes during a political debate. Placing the watermelon upon his head, he thanked the thrower for providing him with a helmet to wear as he fought Philip of Macedonia.

6. Ask students where Rome, Italy is located, using lines of longitude. (Answer: Between 10 degrees E and 15 degrees E.)

7. Explain the terms **lines of latitude** and **equator**. (Lines of latitude are called parallels. They run east and west. The equator is at 0 degrees latitude. Half of the parallels are north of the equator and half are south of it.)

Southern food historian, John Egerton, believes watermelon made its way to the United States with African slaves. Food historian John Martin Taylor says that early Greek settlers brought the method of pickling watermelon with them to Charleston, South Carolina.

8. Ask students where South Carolina is located, using lines of latitude. (Answer – Between 30 degrees N and 35 degrees N.)

9. Ask students what continent South Carolina is located on? (Answer – North America)