Midwest Region

Grade Range: Elementary School
Lesson Time: 40 minutes

Key Terms
Midwest

Materials and Resources
State Chart
Storybook with Midwest setting
Ring or string/yarn

Activity Overview
Have you visited the Heartland of America? Do you even know where the Heartland is? The Heartland is another name for the Midwest region of the United States. The Midwest region is the middle region, meaning it is in the central part of the country, and it has had an important role in farming as well as manufacturing. Students will learn about the Midwest region and its characteristics.

Essential Questions
1. Where is the Midwest region located?
2. What are some interesting facts about the Midwest?

Objectives
- Locate and dissect the Midwest region
- Interpret information about the Midwest
- Create a postcard to display researched facts

Introduction
Prior to this activity, students must either complete the Studio activities United States of America and Regions of the United States or be familiar with the regions of the U.S. Introduce the activity by reading or having the students read a story that has a Midwest setting. Ask students questions about the setting of the story.

zSpace Activity
Activity Questions Provided in Studio
Answers may vary. Sample answers are provided below.
1. The Midwest is made up of 12 states. These states are in the middle of the United States. Examine and dissect the 12 midwestern states. Then recreate the Midwest region on the side of the scene, outside the map. Take a photo.
   Photo.
2. Easterners, people who lived on the east coast, started to leave their homes in search of better farmland in the early 1800s. When they made it to the Midwest, they found the farmland they were looking for. Besides containing forests, the land was flat and the soil was fertile. Why does that make it good farmland? 
*Flat land allows farmers to plant a bigger crop and fertile soil helps grow better crops because the soil has added nutrients.*

3. A nickname for the Midwest is the “Breadbasket of the Nation.” It was given this nickname because of the important crops that are grown there. These crops include corn, oats, and wheat. What do those crops have to do with the nickname “Breadbasket of the Nation”? Open your Backpack, search for one of the crops, and add it to the scene. Take a photo.
*Crops such as wheat are used for baking foods like breads, cakes, and cookies.*

4. There are a few major rivers that run through the Midwest: the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi. The Mississippi River runs through 5 of the 12 states of the Midwest region. Historically, this river was important for many reasons, including transportation of people, animals, and food and as a source of water for cooking and cleaning. Why would the river be an important means of transportation before cars were invented? Open your Backpack and add several items that might be shipped up and down the river to the scene. Take a photo.
*Rivers were important means of transportation because they allowed larger amounts of goods and more people to be moved over long distances more easily compared with overland travel.*

5. The Midwest is not located by any oceans, but does include many lakes. The Great Lakes consist of 4 separate lakes that border Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Open your Backpack and select a fish for each lake. Place one fish on each lake and take a photo.

6. Although each state in the Midwest has big cities, some of these cities are more well known than others. Two Midwest cities that are well known are Chicago in Illinois and St. Louis in Missouri. Chicago is the third largest city in the United States and is a connecting point for trains and planes. What is an importance of connecting points? Open your Backpack and add arrows and models of planes to demonstrate a flight with a connecting point in Chicago. Use labels where needed to explain. Take a photo.
*Connecting points allow people to connect to other flights or trains.*

7. The weather in the Midwest changes as it passes through four different seasons: summer, fall, winter, and spring. The temperatures are very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Looking at the map of this region, which states do you think would have most snow and the coldest temperatures?
*I think the states that are farther north would have the coldest winter with the most snow.*

8. This scene depicts the Midwest. One word used to describe the Midwest is “prairie.” How would you describe the prairie? What other models do you think you could add to this scene? Open your Backpack and select and add 3 additional models. Take a photo.
*I would describe the prairie as an open, flat grassland.*

9. The states are scattered. Reassemble the states to make the Midwest region. Take a photo.

10. If you could visit any state in the Midwest, which state would you want to visit and why?
*I would want to visit Michigan because it is on a big lake and I like to swim and sail a boat.*
Closing

State Postcards
Revisit the facts that the students learned about the Midwest region. Explain that even though these states are part of the same region, they are each unique. Place the students in groups or with partners. Each group will select a different state in the Midwest region. Have students complete the State Chart. Explain that when the State Chart is complete they will create a postcard using information from the State Chart. The postcard must include an illustration or a model that was created in Leopoly. Punch a hole in each of the postcards, then place them on a ring or piece of string so students can flip through them to learn about the other groups’ states.

Extension Activity: Invite a geographer to speak to the class

Follow-up Activity: Southwest Region - Studio
Follow-up Activity: West Region - Studio
Follow-up Activity: Northeast Region - Studio
Follow-up Activity: Southeast Region - Studio

Teacher Note: To help students understand how to create in Leopoly please show or have students view the How to...Leopoly video. Another resource that might also be helpful is the Leopoly Building Tutorial.

Differentiation

● Group students heterogeneously to allow students with a strong command of the English language to assist in reading or interpreting questions
● Provide paper copies of diagrams for students to use as a reference
● Provide a handout with a list of vocabulary terms and definitions that will appear in the activity
● Allow students to provide answers that are handwritten, typed, or verbal
● Give students a variety of presentation styles to choose from (using charts/graphs, PowerPoint, making 3D presentations, creating videos/movies, making posters)
● Have students work as partners or in small groups (younger children could partner with older buddies)
● Enrichment: Students could change an additional variable in the activity and look for patterns
● Enrichment: Students could find real-world problems involving the concept and design solutions to those problems
● Enrichment: Students could research similar topics and create presentations
● Enrichment: Students could build a model of a key concept