

## Sacred Mountains Lesson Plan

**Introduction:** In many cultures, mountains have special spiritual, cultural, and sacred significance. Mountains are held sacred by more than one billion people worldwide. As the highest and most impressive features of the landscape, mountains tend to reflect the highest and most central values and beliefs of cultures throughout the world. Here in the United States, mountain environments like those in the Rocky mountains, Appalachians of the East embody cultural and spiritual values basic to American and native American society. In the fact the writings of John Muir and American Buddhist poet, Gary Snyder demonstrates views of mountains as places of renewal and inspiration.

**Goal:** Introduce and examine the idea of how and why mountains are considered sacred in several cultures. Examine the lifestyles that have emerged around these mountains and consider the future of these sites as spiritual places for renewal.

### Objectives:

- Learn how to use Latitude and Longitude and apply this skill also in the use of Google Maps and Google Earth.
- List several general characteristics of sacred mountains.
- Recognize threats to these mountain regions and their cultures. (Threats may be organic and inorganic in the environment.)
- Formulate policies and or action plans to protect sacred mountains in concert with the needs and wishes of the indigenous populations.

The website has links built into to it to help student get to the places for this project. The four major areas represented to begin this journey are:

1. Mt. Sinai, Egypt
2. Mt. Kailas, Tibet
3. Mt. Fuji, Japans
4. San Francisco Peaks, Arizona, US

Students will be able to easily find these locations and then expand their own search while at the map. All students will need access to the Internet for this project.

**Profiles for each of these locations** will be given to each student or student group for their own review. Sometimes it is best to have students read the profiles prior to study of the mountains online

## Mountain Study Teams: Roles and Tasks:

For those with small classes, the group project may not be feasible but it would be plausible for the students to choose a task that they are interested in, such as *Arts Specialist, Environmentalist, Faith Keeper, Geographer, Historian, Policymaker, Scientist* and maybe even suggest that students derive another task they would consider to be just as important.

## Final Outcome:

Students are to present information about their mountain range and answer the basic questions of why and how this area is sacred and to cover the objectives. Students like to do PowerPoint presentations and this is a great vehicle for their presentation skills. (*Writing and Layout design skills, Computer Applications*)

Other students may wish to write a short news summary and present a news report on the area, akin to something like on NPR, actually writing interviews of the locals regarding the mountains. (*Writing, Acting and Interpretation, Auditory expression*)

Finally, some students may wish to collect several images, draw or compile their own images from the Internet about the mountains and build a short 2-3 minute video presentation that can then be uploaded to Youtube.com for future reference. (*Visual expression and Auditory, compilation of images, computer applications*)

## Additional resources:

### Print:

Bernbaum, Edwin. *Sacred Mountains of the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998.

### Websites:

Places of Peace and Power: The Sacred Site Pilgrimage of Martin Gray  
[www.sacredsites.com](http://www.sacredsites.com)

The Sacred Mountains Foundation: [www.sacredmountains.com](http://www.sacredmountains.com)

### Sacred Places: Mountains and the Sacred:

<http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/mountains.html>

### Photo Essay-Top 10 Sacred Mountains Around the World

<http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/photo-essay-10-sacred-mountains-around-the-world/>

### Sacred Mountain:

[http://www.filepie.us/?title=Sacred\\_mountain](http://www.filepie.us/?title=Sacred_mountain)

*Special thanks to: The Mountain Institute and NCSS Social Education September 1999.*