



PERCEPTIONS OF A PLACE: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

Elementary School
Geography

Grade Level:

4-5

Approx. Time Required:

60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to write about their perceptions of Los Angeles, California.
- Students will be able to write about how perceptions of a place may be different from the reality of that place.
- Students will be able to read, understand, and analyze U.S. Census Bureau data.

Activity Description

This activity will help students understand that people’s perceptions of the world—places, regions, and environments—are constantly changing with new experiences and information. Students will examine Census Bureau data about Los Angeles, and about the rest of California and the United States, to challenge or confirm these perceptions.

Suggested Grade Level:

4-5

Approximate Time Required:

60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

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- Students will be able to read, understand, and analyze U.S. Census Bureau data.

Topics:

- Quickwrites
- Perceptions

Skills Taught:

- Analyzing data
 - Drawing conclusions
-

Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 7 pages

A teacher computer with Internet access and a projector is optional.

Activity Item

The following item is part of this activity. The item and its sources appear at the end of this teacher version.

- Item 1: L.A., California, and U.S. Data, 2017

For more information to help you introduce your students to the Census Bureau, read

"Census Bureau 101 for Students." This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See chart below. For more information, read

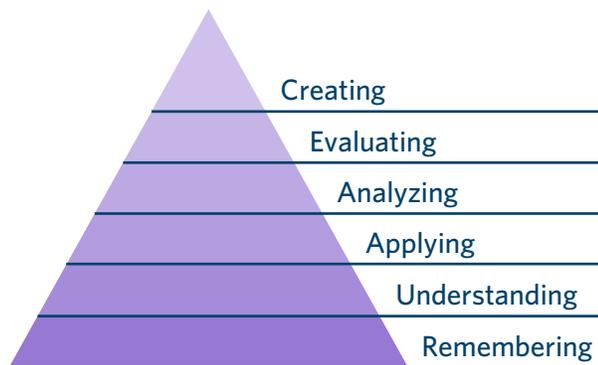
"Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed by Statistics in Schools Activities."

National Geography Standards

Standard	Grade	The student knows and understands:
18 - How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future	4	<p>Perceptions of Geographic Contexts</p> <p>3. People’s perceptions of the world—places, regions, and environments—are constantly changing.</p> <p><i>Therefore, the student is able to:</i></p> <p>A. Explain how people’s perceptions of the world can change with new information and new experiences, as exemplified by being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a recent trip and explain what preconceived thoughts were about the place and how it turned out to be in reality. Explain how the depiction of a place in movies or television can affect how people perceive that place. Describe and explain how a student’s view of his or her home community can be different from someone who is only visiting the community.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Students will *understand* how people’s perceptions of the world (places, regions, and environments) change with new experiences and information.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Industry** – the type of activity at a person’s place of work
- **Median household income** – the middle income when the income distribution of households is divided into two equal parts: one-half below and one-half above (First, we put the household incomes in order from least to greatest. Then, we look for the income that falls right in the middle of the list. That’s the median household income.)
- **Occupation** – the kind of work a person does to earn a living
- **Perception** – how a person understands or interprets something
- **Population per square mile** – the number of people per unit of area (also known as population density)

Teachers should let students know that they are going to be learning about people’s perceptions of the city of Los Angeles, California.

Teachers should further discuss the concept of perception with students, asking them what perceptions of a place are based on. Examples include personal experiences, assumptions, pop culture/movies/television, the news, and stories from friends and family.

Teachers should ask students if they have ever been to Los Angeles (if the school is not located there) and then lead a class discussion on their perceptions of the place.

During the Activity

Teachers should guide students through this activity as a class.

Read-Aloud: Teachers should explain that they are going to analyze one elementary school student’s perception of Los Angeles. Teachers should read Sally’s perception of Los Angeles aloud:

Sally has never been to Los Angeles, but she assumes that it is a beautiful place to live. She knows that Hollywood is part of Los Angeles and that it’s where many movies and television shows are filmed. Sally assumes that Los Angeles is beautiful because she knows that many wealthy celebrities live there. She also assumes that most people who live in Los Angeles are in the entertainment industry and make a lot of money: actors, producers, set designers, stunt doubles, screenwriters, and more. Sally thinks that most people who live in Los Angeles must have graduated from high school and gone to college to earn a bachelor’s degree because that’s probably what it takes to work in entertainment. She also thinks that people in Los Angeles must be better educated than people in other places in California and even the rest of the United States. Sally believes that the weather in Los Angeles is always warm and that people there like to drive convertibles and do things outside. She believes this because some of her favorite shows take place in Los Angeles, and on those shows, there are kids hanging out on the beach and there are palm trees everywhere. Sally also recalls movies

that show lots of people walking along a boardwalk in Los Angeles, so she thinks it's a very crowded city. Overall, Sally thinks Los Angeles would be the most perfect place to live in the United States.

Next, teachers should prompt students to answer question #1 in the student activity.

Introduction to the Census Bureau: Before getting to question #2, teachers should explain to students that they are going to look at data from the Census Bureau as part of this activity. Teachers should tell students that one role of the Census Bureau is to survey U.S. residents to learn more about them. The Census Bureau collects information about where people live, how many people live there, how people spend their money, how much money businesses make, and more. For more information about the Census Bureau, teachers should see the "[*Census Bureau 101 for Students*](#)" handout.

Teachers should explain to students that some of the data in this activity are about industries and occupations. Companies can use this type of data to decide where to locate new plants, stores, or offices or to determine if they should put resources into recruiting more employees.

Teachers should review the data in **Item 1** with students and guide them through completing the chart in question #2.

After the Activity

Teachers should ask student volunteers to share what they wrote for their reflections (question #5).

Extension Idea

Teachers could discuss some of the other data in the table with students, asking questions like: What kinds of careers are included in "Educational services, health care, and social assistance?" Why might this be the most popular industry in Los Angeles, in the state of California, and in the United States?

Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

Activity Item

The following item is part of this activity and appears at the end of this student version.

- Item 1: L.A., California, and U.S. Data, 2017

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to write about my perceptions of Los Angeles, California.
- I will be able to write about how perceptions of a place may be different from the reality of that place.
- I will be able to read, understand, and analyze U.S. Census Bureau data.

Understanding the world around us means learning about different places, but it can also mean discovering how people view those places (and why people see them that way).

Read-Aloud: You are going to analyze one elementary school student's perception of Los Angeles, California. Listen as your teacher reads Sally's perception of Los Angeles aloud:

Sally has never been to Los Angeles, but she assumes that it is a beautiful place to live. She knows that Hollywood is part of Los Angeles and that it's where many movies and television shows are filmed. Sally assumes that Los Angeles is beautiful because she knows that many wealthy celebrities live there. She also assumes that most people who live in Los Angeles are in the entertainment industry and make a lot of money: actors, producers, set designers, stunt doubles, screenwriters, and more. Sally thinks that most people who live in Los Angeles must have graduated from high school and gone to college to earn a bachelor's degree because that's probably what it takes to work in entertainment. She also thinks that people in Los Angeles must be better educated than people in other places in California and even the rest of the United States. Sally believes that the weather in Los Angeles is always warm and that people there like to drive convertibles and do things outside. She believes this because some of her favorite shows take place in Los Angeles, and on those shows, there are kids hanging out on the beach and there are palm trees everywhere. Sally also recalls movies that show lots of people walking along a boardwalk in Los Angeles, so she thinks it's a very crowded city. Overall, Sally thinks Los Angeles would be the most perfect place to live in the United States.

1. How is your perception of Los Angeles similar to or different from Sally's? Explain your answer.

Student answers will vary. Students might not know much about Los Angeles and therefore may agree with Sally's perception. Other students who have visited Los Angeles or lived/live there may note that there is more to the city than Hollywood and entertainment. Students should explain what their perception is and why.

2. As a class, look at the data in **Item 1** to determine if Sally’s perceptions are accurate or not. Complete the following chart.

Topic	Sally thinks ...	The data say ...	Our analysis is that ...
Population per square mile	Los Angeles is crowded.	There are 8,532.96 people per square mile in Los Angeles.	Sally’s perception is correct. There are significantly more people per square mile in Los Angeles than in the rest of California and in the United States as a whole.
Median household income	Most people in Los Angeles are wealthy.	The median household income for Los Angeles is \$60,197.	Sally’s perception isn’t accurate. The median household income in Los Angeles is lower than the median income in California. It is also lower than the median income of the entire United States.
Percentage employed in arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	Most people in Los Angeles work in the entertainment industry.	12.7 percent of people in Los Angeles work in this industry, which is the third most popular industry in Los Angeles.	Sally’s perception isn’t accurate. There are two industries that are more popular in Los Angeles. (There is a higher percentage of people in this industry in Los Angeles compared with the rest of California and the nation, but that doesn’t mean that most people in Los Angeles work in that industry.)

Topic	Sally thinks ...	The data say ...	Our analysis is that ...
Percentage with a bachelor’s degree or higher (aged 25 and older)	Most people living in Los Angeles have bachelor’s degrees. People there are also better educated than people living in other places in California and the rest of the United States.	In Los Angeles, 34.4 percent of people aged 25 and older have a bachelor’s degree or higher.	Sally’s perception is not entirely accurate. The data show that most people living in Los Angeles do not have a college degree. It could be argued that people in Los Angeles (34.4 percent with a bachelor’s) are slightly better educated than the United States as a whole (32.0 percent with a bachelor’s), but people in Los Angeles appear to have about the same level of education as people in the state of California (33.6 with a bachelor’s).

Optional: See the data in **Item 1** to further compare Los Angeles, California, and the United States.

3. You will have about 10 minutes to respond to **one** of the three prompts below for this Quickwrite about perception versus reality. You may choose whichever option you prefer. The purpose of a Quickwrite is to just get your ideas and thoughts on paper. You do not need to worry about writing full paragraphs or a story. You should write freely, jotting down whatever comes to mind.
 - **Option 1:** Describe a trip you went on recently, and explain what your thoughts were about the place before you got there. Was the place similar to or different from what you expected?
 - **Option 2:** Explain how the way a place is shown in movies or on television can affect how people understand that place.
 - **Option 3:** Describe how you see your community, and explain how your view can be different from the view of someone who is just visiting your community.

Student Quickwrites will vary.

4. Think about any school field trips you've been on or vacations you've taken with your family, or even trips you'd like to go on. Why is traveling important? How does traveling somewhere new change our perception of a place?

Student answers will vary, but students should understand that traveling changes people's perceptions of a place for various reasons. It could be that our perceptions of a place are based on what we see in the movies, television, or online—not lived experience. It could also be that how we feel about a place is influenced by our previous experiences and the people around us. Students may say that traveling is important because it increases people's understanding of other parts of the world, helping us learn new things, understand other ways of life, and see how our community is different from others.

5. Reflection: What did you learn from this activity?

Student answers will vary. Students might say that perceptions are not always accurate, but that they are sometimes. Students may also note that perceptions of places change with new information and that in some cases people need to experience a place for themselves before deciding how they feel about it. It is also good for students to understand that data can help people confirm or disprove their perceptions.

Item 1: L.A., California, and U.S. Data, 2017

	Los Angeles, California*	California	United States
Population per square mile	8,532.96	253.80	92.22
Median household income	\$60,197	\$71,805	\$60,336
Percentage employed in arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	<p>12.7%</p> <p><i>This is the third most popular industry in Los Angeles. Industries that are more popular include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational services, and health care and social assistance: 19.3% Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services: 14.9% 	<p>10.4%</p> <p><i>This is the fourth most popular industry in California. Industries that are more popular include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational services, and health care and social assistance: 21.1% Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services: 13.5% Retail trade: 10.5% 	<p>9.7%</p> <p><i>This is the fifth most popular industry in the United States. Industries that are more popular include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational services, and health care and social assistance: 23.1% Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services: 11.5% Retail trade: 11.2% Manufacturing: 10.1%
Percentage with a bachelor’s degree or higher (aged 25 and older)	34.4%	33.6%	32.0%

*Data are from the city of Los Angeles (not Los Angeles County)

Data sources:

Population per square mile: Raw data not available online (calculated internally at the Census Bureau)

Median household income:

https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_1YR/B19013/0100000US|0400000US06|1600000US0644000

Percentage employed by different industries:

https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_1YR/DP03/0100000US|0400000US06|1600000US0644000

Percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher (aged 25 or older):

https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_1YR/S1501/0100000US|0400000US06|1600000US0644000