Because gifted students often demonstrate empathy and moral sensitivity from an early age (Lovecky, 1997; Piechowski, 2006; Shechtman & Sikektor, 2012) they benefit from undertaking geographic place analyses, examining perceptions and data about other people and their lives.

Gifted children often have strong opinions and-aligned with Perry's (1970) Stages of Cognitive Development-assume that everyone shares their beliefs. Poised to develop greater empathy and construct and evaluate disciplinary (geographic) knowledge, they benefit from time to select places of interest, conduct geographic research, and discuss differing findings and opinions with others.

Initiatives in 21st Century Learning include geography as a core subject; as well, global awareness is a 21st Century theme essential for success in tomorrow’s world. Participants practice learning strategies to understand place perception and place analysis. These activities serve as examples of what Professor Julian Stanley called “relevant enrichment” (Gilman, 2008); they can serve as a recurring contribution to a program specifically designed for gifted learners, regardless of primary topics of study.
During this session:

Participants will complete a "Best-Worst Countries" activity, exploring strategies to develop geographic understanding and empathy.

Resources will be provided, including Websites appropriate for geographic and interdisciplinary explorations.

MANY years of experience with gifted children suggest they often love maps and globes. In our interdependent world, students need to appreciate that diverse populations have different perspectives. They need the time and a safe place to gain understanding from curriculum that encompasses "transformation" and even "social action" (Ford-Harris Matrix, 1999).
Visual Resources to Help Envision Other Places

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpW3-JnQL3Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpW3-JnQL3Y) (Fun preassessment for the place analysis process: do these focus on environmental, economic, social, or political themes?)
- [www.miniature-earth.com/](http://www.miniature-earth.com/) (if the earth were a village of 100)
- [http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/videos/](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/videos/) (informative, often beautiful, videos from *National Geographic*)
- [www.onedayonearth.org/](http://www.onedayonearth.org/) (including a free Teacher Toolkit [https://s3.amazonaws.com/ning-files/edu/GForTheTeacher.pdf] so classrooms can upload their own video, as well as videos)
- [www.teachertube.com/videos.php](http://www.teachertube.com/videos.php) (can search for topics, e.g. “Earth” or “countries”)
- [www.arkive.org/](http://www.arkive.org/) (wildlife films and photos, as well as teaching resources)
Resources for Global Information

- http://www.nationmaster.com/ (statistics, pictures, and videos)
We know that students feel strongly about “us” and “others.” They begin developing strong feelings about their school vs other schools, or their favorite teams vs other teams.

It’s important to think about where these feelings come from—and how positive or negative feelings can become tied to “nationalism,” “patriotism,” or “ethnocentrism,” “jingoism,” or even “chauvinism.” (good words to learn and understand)

How many conflicts in the world are linked to those who cannot or will not tolerate others’ beliefs and lifestyles?
You can read more about Dr. Stanley at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Stanley.

Dr. Stanley is recognized for his establishment of the “talent search model” for gifted/talented students; you can read about an interview with Dr. Stanley at https://tip.duke.edu/node/782, in which he explains the importance of the talent search.

The Belin-Blank Center innovated the talent search model for elementary students; you can read about this opportunity for students in grades 4 – 6 at www.belinblank.org/talent-search.
Relevant Academic Enrichment

• Helps students develop greater expertise in understanding a topic of interest
• ANY topic of study can be extended to include place analysis
Perceptions Aren’t Easy!

• But reflecting on what you know (or think you know) is the key to learning more (noting your perceptions serves the purpose of an “advance organizer”)

• Depending on the age or your students, you might need to provide different terms, or more scaffolding, to help them with this initial step

Beginning with perceptions prevents student projects that sound like Wikipedia—you can allow students to START with Wikipedia after doing their perceptions, but add at least one more resource.
If you start with your OWN location, you can help students develop perceptions about each of these quadrants:

What kind of environment is all around you? At your school, or home? What do you include when considering environment?

Same for economy. What do people do to earn money in your area? You can consider what kids can do, as well as what their parents do. What kinds of things are included when you think about the economy?

Culture refers to all the things about our society—language, religion, education, popular sports/games, holidays—this is one of the easiest areas for students to imagine, since it’s very familiar to them. It’s also a quadrant where assumptions are quickly made: everyone must do things the way we do them! Lots of good children’s books about the DIFFERENT ways we live: A Life Like Mine: How Children Live Around the World; Children Just Like Me: A Unique Celebration of Children Around the World....

Politics is easy to see around us in election years, and many schools have student governments. Books such as Grace for President can help even younger children think about politics. Tales for Little Rebels is filled with stories about social justice and the power to change the status quo.
WCGTC, 2017: Australia

Perceptions of the Australian Environment?
- Describe the “natural world” (habitat) of Australia?
- What kinds of animals do they have?
- What environmental problems do they have?
- What other questions would help your students?
- What are YOUR perceptions of Australia’s environment?
Australia

Perceptions of the Australian Economy?
- How do people make and spend money?
- What is the name of their currency?
- What other questions can help your students understand “economy”?
- What are YOUR perceptions of Australia’s economy?
Australia

Perceptions of the Australian Culture?

- What is daily life like in Australia?
- Language? Activities? Religion?
- What other questions can help your students understand “culture”?
- What are YOUR perceptions of Australia’s culture / society?
- Older students can review more sophisticated concepts at CIA World Factbook.
Australia

Perceptions of the Australian Politics?
- What type of government does Australia have? Who leads the country?
- What kinds of things concern them?
- What other questions can help your students understand “politics” and/or government?
- What are YOUR perceptions of Australia’s politics?
Consider a Graphic Organizer

Perceptions of the Environment
Perceptions of the Economy
Perceptions of the Culture (Society)
Perceptions of the Politics (Government)
Information Learned

• Same format as perceptions (subheadings, graphic organizer)
• Can be useful to compare to your own nation, since that’s what students “know”
• Students can compare quadrants about their own countries with each other’s countries, and by region

Possible Lesson Plans

• countries.mrdonn.org/index.html (free, with information for teachers, as well as for kids)
• www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/free-lesson-plans/comparing-countries.cfm (free for K - 5)
• teachers.net/lessonplans/subjects/geography/ (free, extensive collection, various ages)
• http://www2.mcrel.org/lesson-plans/geography/index.asp (free, from the Mid-continent Research for Education Learning, McREL)
• www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/trip-around-world (free with PowerPoint; examines national constitutions around the world)
CIA World Factbook

• Median Age: **38.3** years (US **37.6** years)
• Birth Rate: **12.15** births/1,000 population (US **13.42**)
• Net Migration: **5.65** migrant(s)/1,000 population (2.45 migrant[s])
• Life Expectancy: **82.15** (79.68)
• Infant Mortality: **4.37** deaths/1,000 live births (6.17 deaths)
Older maps have made many Americans believe that Australia is a very small country. Hopefully, we can help children understand why all “flat maps” have distortion!
Information: Australia

The Australian **Economy**

- $1 US Dollar = $1.37 Australian Dollar
- Australia has a strong/stable financial system; revenue from **taxes** is 33.3% of the GDP, and the top tax rate is 45%.
- “GDP Per capita” is $46,400 ($54,800 US)
- Service sector = 67.4%; agriculture = 3.7%; industry = 28.9%
Information: Australia

The Australian Culture

- Australia has no official language (English is the *de facto* language).
- 30% are Protestants; 25% Catholic; 22% “none”
- Multiracial, multicultural, with an important heritage from the Aborigines
- Almost everyone lives near the coast.
### Australian Politics / Government

- Australia is a federal parliamentary democracy / Commonwealth realm
- Canberra is the capital and voting (at age 18) is compulsory.
- Political parties include Greens, Labor, Liberal, Family First, Australian, among others

The Commonwealth realm is one of 16 sovereign states that are members of the Commonwealth of Nations, with Queen Elizabeth II as reigning constitutional monarch.
Sites Designed for Students

- kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/ (National Geographic site; games, countries, images, and more!)
- www.sldirectory.com/studf/geography.html (a “virtual middle school library” for geography)
Changes in Perceptions

• Are key
• Reinforce the importance of LEARNING, rather than being “right”
• Emphasize an analysis of the differences in findings vs perceptions
• What was different between your perceptions and these brief findings about Australia?

Global Social Learning Network

• [www.epals.com/](http://www.epals.com/) (free to join, “Safely Connect With Classrooms Around the World for Collaborative, Project-Based Learning”)
Summary

- Australia has amazing animals.
- Australia is a BIG country but dry!
- Aborigines are important....

Articles

- education.nationalgeographic.com/education/multimedia/why-is-geo-literacy-important/?ar_a=1 (resources from National Geographic!)
- education.nationalgeographic.com/education/standards/national-geography-standards/?ar_a=1 (National Geography Standards)
Maps

- [www.yourchildlearns.com/geography.htm](http://www.yourchildlearns.com/geography.htm) (maps, including online interactive maps)
- [https://www.google.com/help/maps/education/](https://www.google.com/help/maps/education/) (mapping tools from Google)
- [https://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/](https://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/) (outline maps free for classroom use)
- [www.nationalgeographic.com/kids-world-atlas/maps.htm](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids-world-atlas/maps.htm) (customize or explore maps from National Geographic, plus additional links to follow)
- [http://education.nationalgeographic.org/](http://education.nationalgeographic.org/) (National Geographic Education Home, with Giant Traveling Maps)
- [www.worldmapper.org](http://www.worldmapper.org) (a collection of world maps that illustrates changing projections)
Resources

• Use a format preferred in your school
• Multiple sources
• Map (http://australia.gov.au)
• Other sources and sites

Physical Geography

• https://www.ncsu.edu/project/meridian/jan99/visearth/index.html (The Visualizing Earth Project, focused on physical geography)
• download.cnet.com/8301-2007_4-9744393-12.html (Google’s Earth from above)
• http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2008/03/07/the-best-websites-for-learning-teaching-geography/ (The Best Websites for Teaching & Learning Geography)
• http://slimwindows.blogspot.com/2012/01/geography-teachers-try-these-44-web.html (Geography Teachers: Try These 44 Web Sites With Your Classes, with mapping, cultural, and physical geography sites; some sites may no longer function)
• http://geographyworldonline.com/teach.html (resources for geography teachers, e.g., make puzzles, games for lessons)
If you begin your studies of place with this type of place analysis, anything you do subsequent to that will be stronger, more accurate, and more informative.

Students can EASILY see how much they’ve learned when they compare their perceptions to what they’ve learned.

Note: many gifted children learn that they don’t WANT to be wrong—noting their perceptions is very much like making a hypothesis, and when your perceptions aren’t accurate, that means you can learn a GREAT DEAL! It’s not a bad thing!
Information about the United States

• [ipl.org/div/stateknow/](http://ipl.org/div/stateknow/) (information about states in a format especially useful for younger learners, provided by ipl.org, a public service organization and a learning/teaching environment)

• [www.50states.com/](http://www.50states.com/) (the basics, from capitals to state birds, flowers, and flags)

• [www.infoplease.com/states.html](http://www.infoplease.com/states.html) (basics, plus place comparisons in various areas)

• [www.netstate.com/](http://www.netstate.com/) (variety of information, including environmental updates)

• [www.nascio.org/aboutNascio/profiles/](http://www.nascio.org/aboutNascio/profiles/) (state profile links, provided by the nonprofit National Association of State Chief Information Officers)

• [www.ncsl.org/](http://www.ncsl.org/) (National Conference of State Legislatures; political emphasis)

• [wikis.ala.org/godort/index.php/State_Blue_Books](http://wikis.ala.org/godort/index.php/State_Blue_Books) (state “blue books”—compilations of statistics—provided by the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association)

• [ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/st/StateStats.htm](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/st/StateStats.htm) (statistical information about the states, provided by the University of Colorado)