

# HANDS-ON GEOGRAPHY

"EASY & FUN ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORING GOD'S WORLD"



by Maggie S. Hogan

# Hands-On Geography

## Easy & Fun Activities for Exploring God's World

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# INTRODUCTION

Geography -- this vital subject, once heavily emphasized in early American education is now, too often, neglected. We are, as a nation, geographically illiterate. We've all read horror stories of students who were unable to identify the United States on a map of the world or to name the ocean off the coast of California. In my travels, I've heard more stories about adults who are equally dismal in their geographic knowledge.

As Christians, isn't it incumbent upon us to teach our children about God's world around us? How are we, or they, going to be witnesses to the ends of the Earth if we can't even find our way there! Of course, geography isn't just the location of places. Economics, politics, science, religion, and culture are all affected by, and intertwined with, geography. For us to impact the world for Christ we need to be aware of our world, now more than ever.

Political events and social issues can best be understood in the context of history and geography. Informed citizens wanting to be Christ's ambassadors need to understand from where we come as well as something about the world around us.

This book contains ideas, teaching tips, reproducibles, projects, and resources for teaching geography throughout the elementary years. Browse through and then pick a few activities to do. There is not a certain order in which they should be done, although some of the map projects are more advanced than others. The idea is to begin somewhere and then remember to teach geography on a regular basis, realizing that geography can often be easily included in history, science, and even literature. Look for ideas that are appealing to you, that have relevance to your child's interests, or significance to other courses you're teaching.

Besides specific geography activities, many of the ideas in this book include history, science, literature, and art. The Five Themes of Geography are included, along with some teaching ideas for explaining each theme. Perhaps the National Geography Bee would be good motivation for your family; don't miss the chapter on preparing for the Bee. A section on timelines is included because, after all, everything happens *some**time*** as well as *some**place***. In the back of the book you'll find a wealth of outline maps, vocabulary words, and resources.

I hope this book is a great beginning to a lifelong geographic adventure! Now is the best time to be motivated and encouraged to teach this important subject!

Blessings,

Maggie Hogan

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# Chapter 1

## Homemade Games

Making homemade games is an appealing way to learn more about geography. Why make board games? Game making is an excellent learning activity for many reasons:

A. Students use higher level thinking skills:

1. what's the purpose of the game?
2. what are the rules?
3. what is the strategy?
4. long range planning
5. board design

B. The research adds depth and breadth to a subject.

C. The "fun factor" provides motivation for study.

D. Games are great pre-study interest builders or post-studies retention checkers.

Games can range from simple memory or "go fish"-type games to more complex problem-solving games or fact-finding games. It helps to start with simpler games before moving on to the more difficult. It is easiest to begin with assigning the type game they are to make -- using a familiar and easy-to-play game as the model, for example "Memory," "Bingo," or "Candy Land."

How do you actually do this? This chapter includes tips and hints as well as a couple of sample game ideas to get those creative juices flowing. Use these as a jumping off point. Kids love the opportunity to make rules, exert some decision-making control, and play all at the same time!

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### Tip

Where do I find pieces to use? Buy old board games at yard sales for \$1.00 and save them for game-making time. Scavenge for spinners, dice, marks, boards, and any other cool pieces. Forget the rules and save just the good stuff. Dump the works into a big "game box" and now the kids have a ready assortment of pieces to use in building their next game... Or, check under the couch...

### What about rules?

Rule making can be problematic. Major tip: play it in stages as it is being designed to check for rule problems. It's very frustrating to

spend lots of time on a game and then find out as you're playing it that the rules just don't work. Part of the challenge, of course, is creating simple and workable rules. That's way modeling a game after existing games is preferable for the elementary crowd.

### How much time?

Allow more time than you think you need! Game Day might mean setting aside a whole day or two to work on the game while the enthusiasm runs high. If you can't do that, then certainly allow four or five afternoons to finish the project.

# Chapter 6

## Missionary Geography

“He (Jesus) said to them: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:7-8 (NIV)

“As for me, far be it from me that I should sing against the Lord by failing to pray for you.”  
1 Samuel 12:23 (NIV)

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”  
Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

We are called to pray for one another. We pray with our children about concerns and praises within our family, church and community. Do we remember to pray with them about people internationally? One way people do this is by praying for specific missions and missionaries as well as through offerings and correspondence.

Often missionary families have children, either in boarding school or with them on the mission field. Perhaps your family can begin to write to them regularly. Robin Stewart and her husband, parents of four and for many years missionaries stationed in France, shared this: “Something as simple as a postcard with greetings and a favorite memory verse means a lot to the children. Just realize that for various reasons, they cannot always return your note. Think of it as a ministry of encouragement.”

The resources and activities on the next few

pages will give you some ideas on how to incorporate geography into missionary support and prayer. Use these ideas as a jumping off point in planning your lessons. Praise God for the diversity of our world and for His people who have dedicated their lives to the sharing of the gospel to the ends of the earth!

### **Missionary Geography Ideas**

- ♦ Study the life of a missionary. Use biographies. Study the geography of his or her mission field. Act out a dramatic scene. Draw or paint a picture of their mission world. YWAM publishes terrific books on missionaries for the 8-12 crowd that make great read-alouds.
- ♦ Learn more about your church’s or your denomination’s missionaries. Where do they serve? What is it like being a missionary in this day and time?
- ♦ Choose a country, continent, or people group. Pray for the unsaved people there. Pray for serving missionaries. Use *You Can Change the World* volumes 1 or 2 to discover prayer requests and much more.
- ♦ Write missionaries and/or their children. Earn money to send them special gifts. They especially appreciate children’s Christian literature, music, and magazines. Save your old “Clubhouse” magazines to mail in a batch, or enter a gift subscription in their name.

- ◆ Make a missionary map. Attach pictures of missionaries you are studying to the appropriate countries.
- ◆ Find out what time it is in your chosen country. If you pray for your missionaries at lunchtime, what time is it where they are? Should you be praying that they wake up refreshed or for a good night's rest? This is a wonderful method to make time zones meaningful!
- ◆ Make a missionary or country "Prayer-a-Day Calendar." Have students draw a monthly calendar (or print a blank one off of your computer.) Pick a specific prayer request for each day or week. Check it off each day as you pray for them.
- ◆ Borrow or purchase a Bible in another language. Copy favorite scripture and post it. Why do we need Bibles in other languages? How do people go about translating the Bible? What languages was the Bible originally written in? Read a biography of Wycliff or other Bible translators.
- ◆ Learn a Christian song in another language. Try your library or church for tapes of songs and scripture in foreign languages. What would it be like to be a missionary's child and go to a land where you didn't speak the language?
- ◆ Try and attend missionary meetings when they come back on leave. Think ahead of time about the questions you would like answered. Ask them for prayer requests.



# Missions Relief Map

## Materials

- ◆ Salt map dough (see recipe on next page)
- ◆ Piece of smooth wood, cookie tray, or other sturdy surface
- ◆ Tempera paints
- ◆ Clay dough
- ◆ Various toys and household scraps
- ◆ Topographical map of country being studied
- ◆ Reference books

## Directions

1. Make salt dough based on recipe on next page.
2. Draw map outline onto wood, or tape an enlarged copy of the map directly onto the flat surface you're using.
3. Spoon on dough and spread it out. Build up for mountains, carve out lakes, rivers, valleys, etc.
4. Let dry thoroughly then paint.
5. While it is drying, begin to make a village on or next to the map.
6. Use clay dough for rocks, cooking pots, housing, etc.
7. Use clothes pins or chenille wires to form people. Learn about native dress and get creative with your little people!
8. Build the missionary compound out of appropriate materials. (Thatched huts or bricks?)
9. Use aluminum foil for water, twigs and weeds for trees and bushes. Spread on glue and pour on sand where appropriate.

This is a great group project to do over several bad-weather days. (Although moisture in the air will slow down the salt dough drying.) While the map is drying students can be learning about the country and people from your resource and reference books. Encourage authenticity but be flexible! Some things are just hard to duplicate. While they are working, read aloud to them out of first-rate exciting books about the land of a person who lived there. Allowed some freedom, kids will take off on this project. Don't forget to take pictures of the finished product!

## Missions Relief Map (continued)

Encourage your students to write about what they learned and attach it to their map/diorama. After the masterpiece is done, see if you can display it in your church or library.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Salt Dough Recipe

Salt dough maps are easy, inexpensive, and unbeatable for tactile learners! Making a salt dough map at the beginning of your history studies is a sure-fire method for students to truly learn the "lay of the land." History is more meaningful when they have a solid grasp of the "where" of it.

#### Materials for Salt Dough

- ◆ 2 cups flour
- ◆ 1 cup salt
- ◆ Water -- enough to make dough sticky but workable

#### Materials for Map

- ◆ Reference atlases
- ◆ Salt dough
- ◆ Heavy piece of cardboard
- ◆ Copy of an outline map (optional, but very handy!)
- ◆ Food coloring or poster paints (optional)

#### Directions

1. Glue outline map to cardboard leaving at least one inch around the border for ease in carrying. If you'd like to have a key, leave a blank space for it.
2. Mix dough ingredients.
3. Optional: separate dough and then color it according to physical features i.e., blue for water, green for land, brown for desert, etc.
4. Using a physical reference map in an atlas, place dough on map by color, according to physical features. Build up mountain ranges; make valleys and lakes, etc.
5. Optional -- when dry, paint with poster paints.
6. Make a key and attach to the border of the map.

#### Tip

Salt dough maps take much longer to dry on wet or muggy days. After map dries, take a picture of it. Salt dough maps don't "save" well, but pictures do!

# Missionary Resources

## **Wycliffe Bible Translators**

P.O. Box 628200  
Orlando, FL 32862-2000  
800.992.5433 or  
407.852.3600  
[www.wycliffe.org](http://www.wycliffe.org)

## **ABS Interactive**

American Bible Society  
1865 Broadway  
New York, NY 10023  
800.32.BIBLE  
[www.americanbible.org](http://www.americanbible.org)

## **Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse**

P.O. Box 63600  
Colorado Springs, CO 80962-3600  
719.574.7001  
[www.aapc.net](http://www.aapc.net)  
[mail@aapc.net](mailto:mail@aapc.net)

Adopt-A-People publish a series of country profiles in the size and format of passports, providing information more detailed than that in You Can Change the World. Write for available countries and prices.

## **YWAM Publishing**

Youth With a Mission (YWAM) is an international missionary organization of Christians from many denominations dedicated to presenting Jesus Christ to this generation. Their catalog is filled with terrific mission-minded books for youth and adults. Check out their series Christian Heroes: Then and Now, biographies of great missionaries written for youth. They carry the excellent children's resources You Can Change the World Volumes I & II. These A-Z guides to countries and people groups that need to hear the gospel include stories, charts, maps, facts, color illustrations, and prayer ideas. Highly recommended -- go to the "bookstore" link!  
[www.ywam.org](http://www.ywam.org)

## **Voice of the Martyrs**

This organization puts a global perspective on the persecution of God's children. Check out their great web site, including a section for kids. Sign up on-line for their free (and worthwhile) newsletter, The Link.  
[www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com)

# Chapter 9

## Language Arts and Geography

### Literature and Geography

Great books are a great place to turn to learn more about geography! Simply mapping stories is certainly a fine activity but if you want to really dig into a book, try a complete unit study. Choose a book with a strong geographic theme, depth, and detail. The classics are usually good places to look. The following is an outline of a complete unit study using [Around the World in Eighty Days](#) by Jules Verne. Many thanks to LuAnn O'Connell for relating how she and her two daughters did a world geography study using this classic book.

#### In LuAnn's words:

"Our family found studying [Around the World in Eighty Days](#) one summer to be a fun and effective way to study world geography. After all, what other book contains the diversity and adventure of a brisk walk down Pall Mall in London, a steamer voyage through the three-year-old Suez Canal, an elephant ride across the Indian jungle, a leisurely carriage ride in Singapore, conveyance on a palanquin in Hong King, a journey on a steam train attacked by American Indians, a freezing sail on a wind-driven ice sledge across the American prairie, the hijacking of a trading vessel in the Atlantic and a harrowing hansom cab ride through London? Fascinating characters, challenging vocabulary, lessons in time and longitude, map reading, and the events of the Victorian Era rounded out the study covering geography, history, language arts, and math all in eighty days (which is how much time we spent on this study!).

My daughters, Tabitha and Grace, and I used the [Whole Story](#) version of this book as the basis of this unit study. This particular version contains side notes giving background information on countries and cities, history and science. As we read, we followed Phileas Fogg's progress on a blank world map, marking the city and date of arrival. My oldest daughter, Tabitha, gained skills in creating tables by making a table of Fogg's itinerary with his projected and actual arrival and departure dates at each city when mentioned in the book. We used the [Audio Memory Geography Songs](#) tape and book to learn the countries of the world, concentrating on Asia as we were in the process of adopting a little girl from China at the time. With the computer software [World Discovery Deluxe](#), Grace, Tabitha and I played map quizzes about countries, capitals, major rivers and flags. With the same software we created our own map quiz of questions from the story. For more in-depth study each of us chose on the countries Fogg passed through to give an oral report on, allowing me to teach them outlining, research, and presentation skills.

Most of our activities related in some way to geography. For science, since steam power played such a large role in Fogg's travels, we studied the development of the steam engine and visited a museum with a real steam train. We discussed why the Calcutta to Bengal railroad was longer than the distance the crow flies (mountains) and why the shortest routes for international flights often take planes to northern latitudes,

testing this with a string on a globe. (We also got to fly over the North Pole on our flight to China!!)

We learned about three major climate zones of the earth: arctic, temperate, and tropical and used art books to draw animals from each region.

For math related activities, we graphed and compared populations of the largest countries and endeavored to understand Fogg's miscalculation of the length of his journey which resulted from traveling toward the sun.

For language arts, Tabitha and Grace labeled the pictures they had drawn while I read aloud. Tabitha copied dialogue from the book to learn the correct mechanics of writing dialogue and studied vocabulary words used in the story, such as "taciturn" and "tranquil." Also, in the Whole Story version we learned about geographically related word origins -- for instance, "leotards" are named after the nineteenth century French acrobat who invented the flying trapeze and "bungalow" comes from the Hindi word which means "of Bengal." We viewed the TV mini-series of this story, comparing it to the book. (Author's note -- our family began to view the movie version and found it to be unacceptable. We've not found the TV mini-series.)

The culmination of our journey around the world were several international meals Tabitha and I served from countries and regions visited by Phileas Fogg as well as an Around the World in Eighty Days TV show the girls produced themselves. Some of the meals we enjoyed were meatballs and grissini (bread sticks) from Italy and lentil soup and pita bread from the Middle East. On the night of our French meal featuring

French beef soup, homemade French bread and lady fingers, the girls showed their TV show to their grandparents and family. Scenes Tabitha and Grace had drawn from the book and pasted on a scroll were pulled through the cardboard box "TV" as they took turns narrating the story. We had intended to go all the way around the world with our menus, with Navajo tortillas from America and an English tea to celebrate Fogg's return to England, but unlike Phileas Fogg, we ran out of steam in Japan!

Around the World in Eighty Days is such a rich book. There is much that can be studied from it: world religions, transportation, Victorian culture, colonialism, languages, the Suez Canal, Native Americans, India, Japan, advanced map skills, the effect of topography on transportation and population, world travel today, etc. This is an ideal book for a family or support group who wish to study world geography through living books and have fun doing it!"

# Writing and Geography

## Fifty State Files - Kids Love Mail!

One worthwhile way to learn about the 50 states is to begin a 50 state file. Combining letter writing skills with research, filing, and even some art, this long-term project can culminate in a useful collection of facts, pictures, information and maps.

**Challenge:** In one year can we collect a map, postcard, or brochure from each of the 50 states?

### Materials

- ◆ USA wall map
- ◆ Expandable file folder or file box
- ◆ 50 folders or 50 divider tabs
- ◆ Student \*50 State Notebook (3 ring binder or composition book)



Help the student craft a letter asking for information and a map, postcard, or brochure about a state. Have the student explain the project simply and ask for exactly what they are looking for. Send letters to the Chamber of Commerce for each state. You can find this information at the library or <http://chamber-of-commerce.com/search3.htm>

Also, you might try the Chamber of Commerce in some of the bigger cities in each state for additional materials.

In order not to overwhelm the student both in letter writing and in amount of material coming in the mail, stagger your requests to about five per month. This also keeps postage from becoming a big issue. (Additionally, they could send postcards in lieu of letters to save money.)

As material arrives in the mail, the student browses through it and picks out the items of particular interest. Students might want to cut out pictures to copy or tape into their student notebook or on the wall map. Help them decide what's valuable to keep and what might be tossed.

## Fifty State Files - Kids Love Mail! (continued)

### Tip

Predetermine what in particular you'd like to learn about: animals, road maps, weather, state parks, tourist attractions, famous citizens, etc. Teach them how to file away the information.

The Student Notebook of 50 States might also include information that can be collected from a student almanac: state bird, state motto, date of admittance into the union, etc.

The neat thing about the file box is that you can use it for years to come for:

- Travel information for family or friends -- a goldmine of resources right at your fingertips.
- Resources for reports as students get older
- Variety of pictures to cut out and tape to maps or to use in other projects.

### Other options

Use the Internet to research the states and print out appropriate information.

Use the public library for books on each of the states, magazine articles, perhaps even videos.

Instead of a file box your student could keep a student notebook with just selected information taped into it.

\*The Student History Notebook of America has 50 blank pages that would work great as a 50 States Notebook. See Resources.

### World File Box

Using the above ideas, write Embassies to collect information about places around the world.

# Vocabulary and Geography

## Geographic Terms

Aquifer	Food Chain	Peninsula
Atoll	Front	Permafrost
Bay	Geyser	Plain
Biosphere	Glacier	Prairie
Bluff	Gorge	Precipitation
Bog	Government	Prime Meridian
Butte	Gulf	Reservoir
Canyon	Habitat	Richter Scale
Cartography	Humidity	Ring of Fire
Census	Islands	Rocks - 3 types
Channel	Isthmus	igneous
Civilization	Jet Stream	metamorphic
Clouds	Key	sedimentary
Coastal Plain	Lagoon	Savanna
Conservation	Landslide	Sediment
Delta	Latitude	Seismology
Deserts	Longitude	Silt
Drought	Levee	Sinkhole
Dune	Magma	Solstice
Eclipse	Mantle	Strait
Ecosystem	Marsh	Swamp
Elevation	Mesa	Tides
Equator	Meteoroid	Time Zones
Equinox	Migration	Topography
Estuary	Mining	Tributary
Fjord	Monsoon	Tropics
Flood Plain	Oasis	Tsunami
Fog	Ocean	Water Cycle
		Wetland

---

These are just a few of the many geographic terms that children should become familiar with over the years. Many lend themselves well to picture definitions. Try using them in map projects and as part of vocabulary/spelling lists. Other geographic words should be added as you encounter them in life, for example: GPS.

# Chapter 11

## MAPS GALORE

### Activities and Projects



- Project #1 - Sticker Geography
- Project #2 - Hero Geography
- Project #3 - Book Maps
- Project #4 - Real Maps in the Real World
- Project #5 - 3-D Maps
- Project #6 - Geo Terms Map
- Project #7 - Current Events
- Project #8 - Favorite Book Maps
- Project #9 - Imaginary Island
- Project #10 - Jigsaw Map
- Project #11 - Map Hobbies
- Project #12 - Neighborhood Map Activity
- Project #13 - More Maps
- Project #14 - Mystery Map Ride
- Project #15 - Treasure Map
- Project #16 - USA Regions

# Maps Galore Project #14

## Mystery Map Ride

Learning to read maps is an important life skill, one that many adults unfortunately have never conquered. Teaching this skill to youngsters is very rewarding but plan on spending time working on it over the years. Be patient. Start very simply and don't move on until the child has a good grasp of the information. It's important to be patient and systematic. Pushing the child to try and read road maps without the skills necessary to do so is expecting them to do Algebra without having learned basic arithmetic! Here are some steps to take in teaching map-reading skills:

1. Introduce children to skills via a few good workbook style pages, draw your own, or use one of the outline maps in this book.
2. Terminology is very important. Left, right, straight, before, after, etc. must all be understood before moving on to east, west, etc.
3. Illustrate the idea of icons. The drawn picture of a bed stands for the bed. The single tree or two might stand for a whole grove. Even non-readers can decipher simple maps drawn with good icons.
4. Draw maps of the child's home environment to use in simple treasure hunt games. Once he understands these kinds of maps he might enjoy drawing them himself.
5. When the very simple map is mastered, move on to slightly more complicated maps involving backyards or neighborhoods. Use each new map several times until you're sure the child is confident in the use of it.
6. Eventually, you'll work your way up to the "Mystery Map Ride." This can be done as a "Mystery Map Walk" first, only going to the car ride when you're sure your student has a good chance for success.

### Materials

- ◆ Homemade map or written directions
- ◆ Transportation

### Directions

Using a real road map as a guide, draw a simple map from your house to a "secret" destination. (It could be to the park, the library, a friend's home, or anywhere that suits your fancy!)

The kids become the navigators. They read the map and give the directions. You might start out with a walking mystery map excursion before working up to a car ride. In the car, the kids will need to direct you when to turn, etc. This isn't easy! (How many adults do we know that are good at this?) But by starting out with simple, uncomplicated trips and using this "game" often, your students will become able map readers and navigators -- an important life skill!

## Mystery Map Ride (continued)

### **Variation**

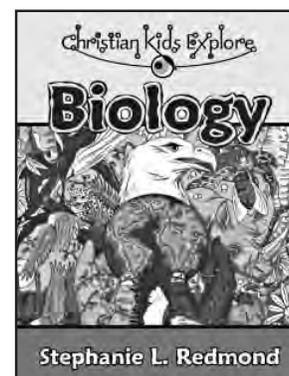
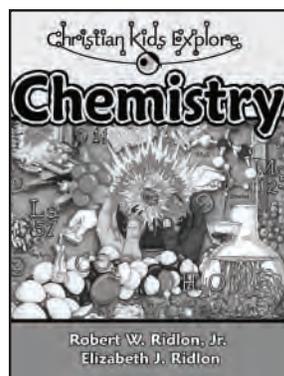
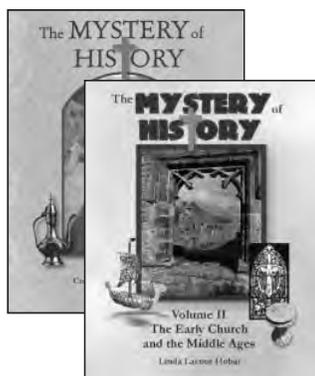
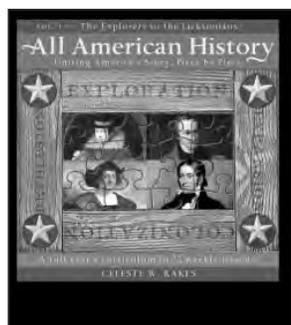
A friend used this idea for a Mystery Bike Ride. She “planted” a special treat along the way. When they navigated their bikes correctly to a friend’s house they found a coupon taped to the front door with a lunch date and play time with their friends!

### **Tip**

After you and your children have had good success with this in your neighborhood and town introduce them to real road maps and allow them to guide you with it on longer outings. (I met a man once who let his two teenagers do all the navigation on a road trip across country. They took him three days out of the way but he never corrected them. They learned from their mistakes and are much more careful map readers now!)



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There are 32 weekly lessons, and each lesson contains three sections examining the atmosphere in which the event occurred, the event itself, and the impact this event had on the future of America.

- Student Activity Book • Teacher's Guide
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#### **Christian Kids Explore Chemistry by Robert W. Ridlon, Jr., and Elizabeth J. Ridlon**

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#### **Christian Kids Explore Physics by Robert W. Ridlon, Jr. and Elizabeth J. Ridlon**

The universe that we live in is the result of God's thoughtful design and careful building. Physics gives us a glimpse into the materials, laws, and structures of that universe. 4th–8th.

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