

Comparative Study of Countries

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time Commitment: 50 Minutes

Subject(s): Economics, Human Geography, World History

Overview: Students will research various economic metrics for countries (United States, Mexico, UK, China, and one additional country). Students review types of economies and match the appropriate type of economy with each country. Finally, students draw a conclusion about which type of economy produces the most prosperous standard of living.

Materials: • Student Handouts • 1:1 Computers or Tablets

Opener (10 Minutes):

1. On the classroom floor, tape off two long lines that look like this (Individual Quality of Life is on the x-axis; National Wealth is on the y-axis):



2. Assign 4 students to represent: Canada, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States. (Optional: assign one other student to represent a wildcard country of their choosing.)
3. Give students a notecard with their assigned country to tape to their shirt.
4. Have the class guide the representative students to where they think they should stand on the large grid on the floor.
5. For clarification, explain that a country with both high ranking for National Wealth and Individual Quality of Life would be positioned in the upper right quadrant of the grid. (You could model this for the class with a different country if necessary.)

Activity (30 Minutes)

1. Divide the class into teams (3-5 students) and have them complete the Student Handout (Pages 3-6)

Closer (10 Minutes)

1. Give teams 2 minutes to prepare to give a rapid-fire data pitch to the class about their wildcard country. Give each team 30-60 seconds to share the country they chose, the type of economic system it has, and whether its quality of life metrics were surprisingly low, surprisingly high, or just about what they expected
2. Summarize what students just shared. It might sound something like, "We just heard about Switzerland, Nigeria, and Brazil. Notice how regardless of the continent, the data keeps telling the same story: stable institutions, open economic systems, and high investment inflows consistently pair with a higher quality of life."

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Tips & Tricks for the Activity

- This lesson is intended to come after students have learned the basics of the types of economies. A solid foundation of those fundamentals will make the lesson more meaningful.

Extension Activity Ideas

- Assign student teams one country to research to go into even more depth with their research.
- Provide additional metrics for students to research
- Allow students to select their own metrics.
- Have students produce infographics about their individual countries to display their research (either by hand or by using digital aids or AI).

Modified Activity Ideas

- If space or other constraints prevent the floor grid, the opener could easily be done using post-it notes on a whiteboard.
- Have students complete the research portion of this lesson individually instead of in groups

Comparative Study of Countries

Student Handout

Name: _____

Block: _____

Team Member First and Last Names (highlight the name of the team member responsible for submitting the assignment)

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For this assignment, you will be looking up economic data for China, Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States, and one more country. With your team, select one more “wildcard” country to research. Record the name of the country you selected:

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Use data from the [World Bank](https://data.worldbank.org/) to look up information about the economies of the countries below.

Refer to the *Social* indicators for these countries and record the data in the columns below.

	Life Expectancy at Birth	Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$3.00 per day (% of population)
China		
Mexico		
United Kingdom		
United States		
<i>Additional Country (Delete this text and record the name here and in the tables below)</i>		

Refer to the *Economic* indicators for these and record the data in the columns below.

	GDP	GDP per Capita (per person)
China		
Mexico		
United Kingdom		
United States		
<i>Additional Country</i>		

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Student Handout

Name: _____

Block: _____

Based on this data, which of these countries has the largest economy?

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Refer to the *Environmental* indicators for these and record the data in the columns below.

	Access to Electricity (as % of population)	People using safely managed sanitation systems (as % of population)
China		
Mexico		
United Kingdom		
United States		
<i>Additional Country</i>		

Refer to the *Institutional* indicators for these and record the data in the columns below.

	Individuals Using the Internet (as % of the population)	Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (% of GDP)
China		
Mexico		
United Kingdom		
United States		
<i>Additional Country</i>		

Finally, select two additional metrics that you think give you insight about the economies of these countries.

	Metric Selected?	Metric Selected?
China		
Mexico		
United Kingdom		
United States		
<i>Additional Country</i>		

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Student Handout

Name: _____

Block: _____

Based on all the data above, which country seems to have a better standard of living? Why do you think that is true?

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Review the different types of economic systems.

Economic System	Key Components
Traditional	- Economic decisions are based on customs, traditions, and beliefs - Little to no specialization of labor - Barter system is common - Resources are allocated based on the needs of the community - Limited economic growth and innovation
Market	- Economic decisions are made by individuals and businesses - Specialization of labor is common - Prices are determined by supply and demand - Private property rights are protected - Competition encourages innovation and efficiency - Limited government intervention
Command	- Economic decisions are made by the government - Little to no private property rights - Central planning determines production and distribution of goods - Little to no competition - Limited consumer choice - Limited innovation and economic growth
Mixed	- Economic decisions are made by both the government and individuals/businesses - Private property rights are protected - Government regulates certain industries and provides public goods and services - Market forces determine prices and allocation of resources - Some level of government intervention to address market failures and promote social welfare

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Student Handout

Name: _____

Block: _____

Next, do some research and discuss with your team the countries you've researched. Record which type of economic system for each of the countries below. *NOTE: You may not have a match for all of the different types and/or you may have more than one of each.*

	Type of Economic System
China	
Mexico	
United Kingdom	
United States	
<i>Additional Country</i>	

Conclusion: With your team, **draw a connection between the level of economic prosperity and quality of life a country has and its type of economy.** *Think: Which countries have the highest GDP? Which countries have the highest GDP per capita? Which countries score the best on the other metrics?* Summarize your thinking in a paragraph. Support your conclusions with data.

This Lesson Plan was:

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