

Discovering Continental Drift and Plate Tectonics Lesson Plan

(1) 50 min period

Materials:

Lecture slides
Topography Map printouts
Internet connection

Prep:

Slides contain a link to a useful online sea-floor spreading animation which requires an internet connection and flash player. Have several color topography maps printed for students to look at up close

Context: This lesson plan covers material on evidence that led to the hypothesis of Continental Drift and the modern theory of Plate Tectonics. This lecture format is to present the pieces of evidence as “observations” first and then lay out the formal definition of the theory. Students should be asked throughout the lecture to look at the slide figures (or at one point, map handouts) and make observations about them.

Lesson Plan & Instructions:

1. Warm up: First lecture slide has a picture of world geography. Have students observe it for a minute and notice the shapes of continents.
2. Continue through the lecture slides (slides annotated in more detail).
3. Midway through the lecture, after summarizing continental drift and before starting on plate tectonics, break up the lecture with a brief map observation activity. If possible, have several color printouts of sea-floor topography maps (11 x 17 preferable). Alternatively, an overhead/slide can be put up at the front of class and small groups discuss it. A guided list of map features for students to identify is given in the slides.