



SYMBOLS ARE THE KEY

Objectives:

- Students will learn the meaning of map key symbols and apply that knowledge to locate features on the map.

Recommended Grades: 3-6

Materials (all included in the trunk):

- *Symbols Are the Key* cards (32)
- *Colored cones* (8 of each color: red, blue, yellow, green)
- *South America Map Keys* (4)
- *Hourglass timer* (optional)

Preparation: 5 minutes

- Distribute eight colored cones to each base camp, matching the color of the camp
- Distribute *Symbols Are the Key* cards face down at each base camp

Rules:



Shoes are not allowed on the map. Please have students remove shoes before walking on the map.



No writing utensils on the map.

INTRODUCTION

Ask students to describe what a map key is and why it is important. Explain that colors and shapes are used as symbols on a map to help us understand what is represented on the map. The map key, also called a legend, is the code to interpreting the map. Every map must have a key!

PLAY “SYMBOLS ARE THE KEY”

Gameplay

Divide the class into four teams—red, yellow, green, and blue—and instruct each team to line up on the gold-braided border near their “Base Camp” (the colored circles in the corners of the map). Distribute one map key to each team.

Explain that teams will locate certain features on the map utilizing their map key and the information on their team cards. Each card includes both a map of the continent with one country highlighted and the name of one map feature.

Instruct the first two players in line from each team to stand on their Base Camp colored circle. These players will draw one card. They will use the Map Key to identify the symbol that matches the feature listed on the card. They set out on the map to find it in the particular country shown on the card. When the duo identifies the correct feature somewhere in the targeted country, they put the card down on that spot and place the cone on top.

After placing the card and cone, the players return to Base Camp and tag the next two players who then set out to find their feature. Only two players from each team will be on the map at the same time.

Winning

Play continues until all of the cards and cones have been correctly placed. As each team completes its pile of cards, the entire team sits down in Base Camp. This helps identify which teams finish first, second, third, and fourth.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION – SIMON SAYS

Now that students are familiar with the map symbols, play a version of Simon Says using statements relating to the Map Key. Direct students to visit various features on the map. If they move towards a location that did not begin with the direction “Simon Says,” or they choose an incorrect place, they will be out. When a student is out, he or she will walk off the map and sit on the border of the map near his or her team’s Base Camp until the start of a new game. Mix the game up and control traffic with qualifiers, like these:

Simon Says **everybody...**

Simon Says **red team...**

Simon Says **all girls...**

Simon says **all boys...**

The hourglass timer will signal the end of each game. The team with the most team members still on the map will be declared the winner of that game. Team members who were out of the game can return to the map for the start of a new game.

No running is allowed. Students who run, touch, or impede other students will be out.

Allow students a few seconds to get to each location that Simon Says for them to visit. Assure students that each game will have a time limit of 5 to 10 minutes to keep “out time” to a minimum.

Remember, to mix in statements without the prefix “Simon Says” to catch students who are not paying close attention.

