



# You claim it, you name it!

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Human Geography

Audience – Human geography

Time required – 15 minutes

## Activity

Discover the variation of toponyms in different regions of the Americas.

## APHG Benchmarks

**APHG: II.C.4. Analyze cultural and political causes and consequences of migration.**  
**APHG: III.A. Explain how culture frame the shared behaviors of a society.**  
**APHG: III.B. Understand that culture varies by place and region.**

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will identify and explain locations in the Americas where French, English, and Spanish toponyms are present today.
- Students will explain why the root language of toponyms in North America varies from region to region.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/humanGeoInquiry5>

## ? Ask

### What is a toponym?

- Toponymy is the study of place names. You will now take a tour of place names in the Americas.
- Click the URL above to launch the map.
- Open and read the map note located inside North America (North Dakota).
- ? Who was North America named after? Why? [*Amerigo Vespucci was the first explorer to identify the New World as new continents.*]
- Open and read the map note located off the west coast of North America.
- ? What is the language of origin and meaning for the name, Pacific? [*Spanish, meaning peaceful*]

## ↓ Acquire

### What is the toponymy of the East Coast?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the Eastern Canada bookmark.
- ? Which languages were used for place names? [*French and English*]
- ? What other cultural traits influenced these place names? [*Religion*]
- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select East Coast.
- With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map (Content).
- Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Settlements - 1655.
- To display a legend, click on the layer name, Settlements - 1655.
- ? Where were the French settlements concentrated? [*Along the St. Lawrence River and Quebec.*]
- ? Where were the English settlements? [*The eastern United States, and eastern Canada.*]

## 🔍 Explore

### What major migrations helped define California toponyms?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select California-Local.
- ? Which languages were used for place names? [*Spanish and English*]
- ? What other cultural factors influenced place names? [*Religion and land use*]
- Turn on the layer, Missions.
- ? Why did the Spanish build missions in California? [*They built them for religious reasons.*]
- ? What spatial patterns do you notice? [*Missions are located along the coastal areas.*]
- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select California-Regional.
- Turn on the layer, Mining Towns.
- ? How were missions and mining settlements distributed? [*missions along the coast; mines inland, near mountains*]

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## Analyze

### How does Trinidad's toponymy compare to Canada and California?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the West Indies bookmark.
- Open and read the map note near Cuba.
- ? Why is this area called the West Indies? [*Columbus thought he was in Asia.*]
- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the Trinidad bookmark.
- Turn on the layer, Trinidad Toponyms. Click the layer name to display its legend.
- ? What were the dominant languages used for Trinidad's place names? [*Spanish, French, English, and Amerindian were the dominant languages.*]
- ? What does the number of languages suggest? [*Trinidad was a contested land, switching between influential countries multiple times.*]

## Act

### What is the relationship between colonization and toponyms?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the European Claims bookmark.
- Turn on the layer, Claims. Click the layer name to display the legend.
- ? How are regional place names in the Americas tied to colonization? [*Eastern Canada has French toponyms. The American Southwest has Spanish toponyms. West Indies has French, Dutch, and British names.*]
- ? Besides toponyms, how does colonization and these early claims affect the world today? [*They affect religion, language, architecture, and so on.*]

## BOOKMARKS

- Click the button, Bookmarks.
- Choose a bookmark name to zoom to a specified map location and scale.

## IDENTIFY MAP FEATURES

- Click on any feature on the map.
- A box will open with information.
- Links and images in the box are often clickable.
- If multiple features are clicked, a play button will appear in the upper right corner of the box, allowing you to cycle between features.

## Next Steps

**DID YOU KNOW?** ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

### THEN TRY THIS...

- Use the Calculate Density tool to analyze the distribution of Spanish missions or mining settlements.
- Conduct research on the history of the mining settlements. Create a Story Map Tour explaining how the toponym reflects the history or geography of the place, e.g., French Gulch, Leadville.

## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these texts.

- *Human Geography* by McGraw Hill – Chapter 7
- *The Cultural Landscape* by Pearson – Chapters 5, 6
- *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture* by Wiley Press – Chapters 5, 6