



# Passport to Learning

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## **General Information:**

1. The “Passport to Learning” unit of study was done with early childhood and kindergarten students. It was based on the “New” Seven Wonders of the World and the fourteen remaining finalists. The new wonders were selected via an internet vote and announced on 7-7-2007.

2. The seven winners are: Chichen Itza - Mexico, Christ Redeemer Statue - Brazil, the Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu - Peru, Petra - Jordan, the Roman Colosseum - Italy, and the Taj Mahal - India.

3. The remaining finalists include: The Acropolis - Greece, Alhambra - Spain, Angkor Wat - Cambodia, the Eiffel Tower - France, Hagia Sophia - Turkey, Kiyomizu Temple - Japan, the Statues of Easter Island - Chile, the Kremlin and Red Square - Russia, Neuschwanstein Castle - Germany, the Statue of Liberty - United States of America, Stonehenge - United Kingdom, the Sydney Opera House - Australia, and Timbuktu - Mali. The Pyramids of Giza, in Egypt, were listed as an honorary finalist, due to its current status as the only remaining ancient wonder of the world. My original plan was to only study the actual “New” Seven Wonders, but when I researched the topic, I discovered that many of the 14 finalists were more familiar to children, thus, I did all 21 candidates.

4. We generally spent two days studying each country. I always researched the “wonder” before discussing it with the children. Students were given basic historical information about the “wonder” and the country in which it was located. We often discussed customs and I occasionally brought in clothing or items from the country. I also used sought out information from parents who were from a particular country that we were studying.

5. When planning a physical activity, I had to consider the age of the children with whom I was working. Therefore, most activities were simple and could be taught in a very short amount of time. I wanted the children to be active as soon as possible. I also tried to balance fine motor and gross motor activities. I made each activity relate either to the actual “wonder” or the country in which it was located. For example, children built their own Stonehenge from wooden blocks, but made their way through an Amazon rain forest obstacle course when we studied the Christ Redeemer Statue in Brazil.

6. A large bulletin board with pictures of all the 21 candidates and a map showing their locations was placed in the hallway. Each time we studied a country, a passport stamp was placed on the picture. I made passport stamps from small pictures I found on the internet. They are currently available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Seven\\_Wonders\\_of\\_the\\_World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Seven_Wonders_of_the_World) . For fun, I used the school’s official seal embosser to make each passport stamp look authentic. The bulletin board generated much discussion among students and parents and served as a constant reminder of the countries we had visited.

7. I made passports for each class that hung outside their classroom door. During Physical Education activities, I took photos, resized them, and printed them off on a word document with an explanation of the “wonder” and the activity that the students did. The passport served as a wonderful tool for showing parents what students were learning in P.E. Parents often told me of the information their children shared.

# New Seven Wonders of the World Activities

## **General Information:**

1. There are many activities that could have been used for several countries. For example, soccer could have been used for Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Italy, France, England, or Peru. I tried to use an activity only one time.
2. I used several dances, as these were generally quick and easy to teach.
3. I researched games from each country, but discovered that there is rarely any game “original.” There are many variations of the same games all over the world.
4. If a special holiday or celebration for a country came up during our study, we studied that country at that time. For example, we studied the Great Wall of China during the Chinese New Year, and Chichen Itza, Mexico, during Cinco de Mayo.
5. Although I chose simpler activities for my students, there are many options for activities. For example, I chose the Kinder Polka for Germany, but older students would be able to handle a regular polka. Although I did not use it, bocce ball is a great activity for almost any European country.

## **Activities Used for the New Seven Wonders of the World Finalists:**

1. The Statue of Liberty (USA) – We held a relay, with several groups racing against each other. We turned a small cone upset down and placed a small red foam ball inside of it for the torch. Each student carried a book in the left hand at hip level. This could be done with each student having his own equipment or passing equipment off to the next person.
2. Stonehenge (United Kingdom) – I borrowed big wooden blocks from the early childhood teachers. I divided the children into as many groups as sets of blocks that were available. Students worked together to create their own Stonehenge. There were some wonderful creations and it was fun to see children using their imaginations.
3. The Eiffel Tower (France) – We did step aerobics to the song “Movin’ on Up,” by M People. We talked about the number of steps (710) to the second observation deck of the Eiffel Tower and questioned if we could walk that many steps before the end of the song. I wore a step counter (older students could wear their own) and the entire class stepped till the end of the song. We then read the step counter to determine if we had stepped up to the observation deck. If not, we had to turn the music back on and keep going. This is a good activity for estimating steps.
4. Neuschwanstein Castle (Germany) – We did the Kinder Polka or Children’s Polka. Children are placed with a partner and the entire class forms a circle. Partners join hands and face each other with their shoulders facing the inside of the circle. (This dance does not require boy/girl partnering.) Perform the following actions:

Hold hands with partner and slide into the circle 2x  
 Stomp 3x - R, L, R  
 Hold hands with partner and slide out of the circle 2x  
 Stomp 3x - L, R, L  
 Repeat above sequence one more time  
 Slap own thighs slow 1x, clap own hands slow 1x, hit partners hands 3x  
 Repeat slap, clap, hit sequence one more time  
 Point right finger at partner and shake it 3x saying, "Now you be good."  
 Point left finger at partner and shake it 3x saying, "Now you be good."  
 Each person takes 4 steps in a circle to the right to face partner again  
 Stomp 3x - R, L, R  
*Repeat entire dance until music ends*

5. The Acropolis (Greece) – We played a game called "Oyster Shell," which, supposedly, is how some Greeks decided arguments. It's like flipping a coin except the dark side or light side of the oyster shell determines the winner. I placed my students into two lines facing each other a short distance apart. A home base line was placed behind each team. I gave each side a different color of swim noodle for tagging. One team was the dark side of the oyster shell and the other the light side. I used a paper plate folded in half, stapled, and painted black on one side. I tossed the "oyster shell" in the air and the side that landed up got to chase the other team to their home base. Any students tagged had to change noodles and go over to the other team. This was a great game of anticipation and students loved it.

6. The Kremlin and Red Square (Russia) – I taught the Troika dance. Students are in groups of 3 that face counter clockwise in a large circle. The three students hold hands and follow the group of three ahead of them in the circle. Perform the following actions.

Jog 4 steps to the right diagonal – r, l, r, l  
 Jog 4 steps to the left diagonal – l, r, l, r  
 Jog 8 steps forward  
 The person on the right runs under the raised arms of the other two people-8 steps  
 The center person follows and turns to face forward-part of the 8 steps above  
 The person on the left runs under the raised arms of the other two people-8 steps  
 The center person follows and turns to face forward-part of the 8 steps above  
 The outside people in the group of 3 joins hands to form a circle – turn 12 steps L  
 Stomp 3x – l, r, l  
 Turn circle 12 steps R  
 Stomp 3x – r, l, r  
 Outside people unhook hands and the entire dance is repeated

7. Hagia Sophia (Turkey) – We played a game from Turkey called, "Run, Rabbit, Run." Students joined hands in a circle and placed one person inside the circle as the rabbit. Another person was the dog and stood outside the circle. The object of the game was to protect the rabbit by keeping the dog out of the circle. The circle had to stay connected but could move their arms up and down to keep the dog out. The circle could also turn. If the dog got into the circle, then the circle let the rabbit out and tried to keep the dog inside. More than one game could be going at once and the rabbit and dog were changed often.

8. Angkor Wat (Cambodia) - Students learned various hand positions (bud, flower, leaf and fruit) for a simple Cambodian dance that I made up. I got the hand positions from the internet and music from I-tunes. Students also participated in a children's game called "ptat kao sou." In this game, two opponents placed 5 rubber bands about 12 inches from the square and placed one finger inside a rubber band. The object of the game was to flick the rubber band into a square marked on the floor. Any rubber band landing on a line or outside the square was not counted. Students had fun working on this fine motor skill and counting the number of rubber bands that landed inside the square.

9. Kiyomizu Temple (Japan) – At this temple there is a building called the Jishu Shrine, dedicated to Okuninushi, a god of love. At the shrine, there are two stones that one can walk through with eyes closed. If this is accomplished, even with a helper, then the person will find true love. We did this in PE by working with a partner. One person closed his eyes and followed the voice of a leader who guided him through two cones set up across the gym. We also had a chopstick relay. I divided the class into small teams and placed them behind cones. At the opposite end of the gym I placed a hula hoop with chopsticks that had been rigged with a piece of paper and a rubber band to operate more like a pair of tweezers. (Chinese restaurants usually know how to do this.) There was also a Styrofoam rice bowl and about 20 cotton balls. The object of the relay was to run down, pick up one piece of rice, put it in the bowl, and run back to the next person who took his turn. The relay continued until all the rice was in the bowl.

10. Sydney Opera House (Australia) – We tried our luck with a boomerang but it was not very successful with early childhood and kindergarten students. We had more success using the hippity hops for kangaroo races. Students sang "Waltzing Matilda" as they hopped.

11. Alhambra (Spain) - We played two games from Spain; Las Cuatro Esquinas, meaning The Four Corners, and Los Relojito, "The Little Clock." In the first game, four hoops were set up in corners. Students were evenly divided into the four hoops and anyone left over was placed in the middle. On the word "go" students changed hoops trying to get there before a person in the middle could beat them to it. Anyone left without a hoop (remember - only a certain number could be in each hoop) went to the center to try on the next turn. In the second game, students turned a rope on the floor and a partner tried to jump over it. Partners traded places often.

12. Timbuktu (Mali) – This location was, at one time, an extremely wealthy community and the site of one of the first universities. Because of this, I chose to do a balance activity using books and plastic gold coins. The object of the activity was to walk down to a hoop filled with gold coins, pick up a coin, balance it on the book (older students used only one hand to carry the book), walk back to the starting line, and repeat the process. I wanted children to see how many coins they could accumulate on the book without dropping them off. Later we tried this activity without the book. Students had to balance the coins on the back of their hand. Any coin dropped was placed back into the hoop.

13. The Statues of Easter Island (Chile) – We played a game called "Statues." From clipart pictures on the internet, I made cards that depicted various sports. Students worked with a partner. One person in each group came to me and got a card. Returning to his partner, he attempted to replicate the sports pose by placing his partner in the same position. No talking was allowed and the partner could not see the card. When the pose was complete, the statue had to guess what sport he was doing. Students traded places and could have as many opportunities as time allowed.

14. The Pyramids of Giza (Egypt) – I talked to my students about the theory that the large stones of pyramids were moved via a rolling method on some type of cylinder shape like large tree trunks. We decided to imitate this motion. I divided the class into groups of three and provided each group with 6 cardboard blocks (stones), one swimming kickboard, and ten half swim noodles. The object of the activity was to transport a student who was carrying one “stone” down to a designated area where the stone would be placed. The team would begin making a pyramid (a pattern of 3-2-1). This would be accomplished by placing swim noodles under the kickboard and sitting a person on top of it holding a stone. A teammate would push the person on the shoulders to move the kickboard while the last person moved the swim noodles from the back to the front so the kickboard could travel. Once the stone was placed, the kickboard and noodles were picked up and carried back to the starting line. Students changed places and a new stone was carried down. This rolling activity takes a lot of time, so make the distance obtainable.

### **Activities Used for the New Seven Wonders of the World Winners:**

1. The Great Wall of China (China) – I researched the date for the Chinese New Year and planned a Chinese Dragon parade. I had done this before so I already had many of the items for the parade. I made a dragon head from boxes, drew and colored another dragon on a long sheet of paper, provided ribbon and sparkle wands for shaking, made paper lanterns, and borrowed small instruments from the music teacher that would make noise (tambourines, bells, wooden blocks, etc.). I dressed up and led the parade with a gong. We went through the halls and outdoors. Many of my Asian students came in traditional dress. It was awesome! Other activities I have done in the past include a Chinese fan dance and a chopstick relay.

2. The Taj Mahal (India) – I wanted a way to use the scooters during my unit so worked them into this activity. I told students about the Taj Mahal originally being decorated with beautiful gems. I borrowed colorful, flat stones (gems) from the early childhood teachers (they sell them at craft stores). I put students with a partner and placed a container of gems in front of them. A short distance from the lines I placed white boards (the color of the Taj Mahal). Each person had his own scooter and his own white board (I borrowed these from teachers, as well.). The object of the activity was to scoop gems into a spoon, ride the scooter down to the Taj Mahal and place the gems on the board. Any gem falling off the spoon or landing off the white board had to be returned to the container. It was a race against a partner to see who could get the most stones on his Taj Mahal. When time was up, students counted their stones. I liked this activity because it was a good combination of fine motor skills (scooping and carrying) and gross motor skills (riding the scooter), as well as a good counting activity.

3. Petra (Jordan) – Petra was, at one time, a wealthy community because it found a way to dam up the water on the mountain and hoard the water supply. Passersby were then charged for water. I took students outside to do a water brigade activity. I divided the students into two long lines and gave each student a cup. The first person in each line had a pail of water in front of them and the last person had a large container that had to be filled. The first person scooped the water from the pail and passed it on to the next person’s cup. This continued down the line, with the last person pouring the water into the container. This continued until one container was overflowing. As simple as it was, the early childhood and kindergarten students loved this activity and talked about it for weeks.

4. Machu Pichu (Peru) – This was a place where I concentrated more on the country than I did the “wonder.” For Peru, I decided to do a popular sport that the country loves - soccer. The weather was uncooperative so we had to play indoors, but soccer is always a favorite with the students, no matter where we play.

5. The Roman Colosseum (Italy) – My students were very interested in the gladiator fights at the Colosseum and even though I tried to downplay the “to the death” aspect, this structure became one of their most recognizable wonders. We held our own gladiator fights, concentrating on knocking a ball off of a cone, rather than hitting another person. Each person used a small, upside down cone with a foam ball placed in it. (For older students, decrease the size of the cone and the ball to make it more challenging.) A swim noodle (sword) was placed in the other hand. The activity ended up to a look a little bit like fencing, with the object of the competition to knock the ball off of the cone in the opponent’s hand. Winners moved on to play a new person and the other gladiator stayed in place to receive a new opponent. Children loved this activity.

6. Christ Redeemer Statue (Brazil) – Since I had already used the “Statues” game for another wonder, I decided to concentrate on the country of Brazil. Since the Amazon rain forest runs through this country, I made an obstacle course that took up the entire gymnasium. We caught tree frogs in scoops, jumped over hurdles like jaguars, walked across the balance beam to avoid the snakes, crawled through caves (tunnels), swung out on a vine (rope) over caiman crocodiles, climbed like monkeys up a rope, walked across stepping stones to avoid the quicksand, used scarves to fly like butterflies, and drove boats (scooters) to navigate our way around the piranha in the Amazon River. Many students mentioned the obstacle course as their favorite activity of our study.

7. Chichen Itza (Mexico) – This was the last activity of the seven wonders unit of study and since the “wonder” was in Mexico, I coordinated this activity with two others that often take place at our school – Cinco de Mayo and Mother’s Day. On the Friday before Mother’s Day, we invite mothers to school for a couple of hours. Coming to the gymnasium for an activity is one of our offerings on this day. This year I decorated the gym and invited mothers to a Mexican Fiesta with their children. They danced the Mexican Hat Dance and the Macarena, sang a song in Spanish, and cracked “cascarones” over the heads of each other. Cascarones are confetti filled eggs that are used in several celebrations in Mexico. I had been saving eggs and making cascarones for the entire year. To make a cascarone, crack an egg carefully around the top and remove the small shell. Use the egg for cooking. Rinse out the egg and dye it in food coloring, if desired. Let it dry. Fill the egg about half full of confetti. (I often use paper from the cross shredder at our school.) Cut a small square of wrapping tissue paper approximately 2”x3”. Glue it down on top of the egg to hold in the confetti. Usually a person sneaks up on another to crack the egg, but I had a different plan. I let the child crack it over the parent’s head first (emphasizing “gently”) and then had the parents do it to the child. When we were done, the gym was a mess, but students and their mothers both had a good laugh.

## Final Notes:

My ideas are merely a starting place for the possibilities that I know others will create for this unit of study. Whatever you chose to do, I wish you and your students an exciting trip!

Thanks to my friend, Sandy Noel, 2008 Midwest Teacher of the Year, for the inspiration to expand upon her idea.