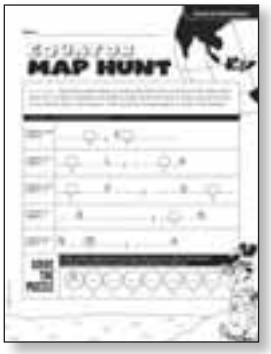
LEARNING ABOUT THE EQUATOR

Give a warm welcome to spring by inviting your students to study some of the hottest places on earth—the tropical rainforests, diverse cultures, and bustling cities along the 25,000 mile-long equator **By Linda Scher and Nathan Katzin**

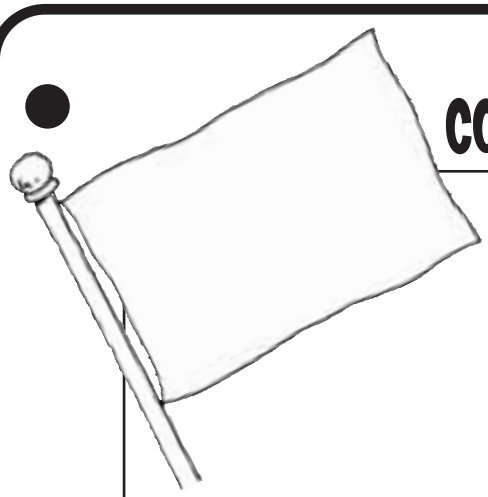
Getting Started Did you know that the rainforests along the equator are home to more than half of the world's plant and animal species? Use this fascinating fact as a fun introduction to your unit. First, share several informational texts about the rainforest with your students, such as Kristin Joy Pratt's *A Walk Through the Rainforest* (Dawn, 1992). Then encourage students to learn more about one rainforest species that calls the equator home. Children can research their species in the library or online and then write a short paragraph about it. Finally, invite students to dress up like their plant or animal and share their research with the class. They will learn what a special environment the equator is!

Equator Map Hunt The equator anchors the latitude and longitude grid system that helps us find any place on a world map. Help students understand the function of this imaginary line using the Equator Map Hunt **Reproducible** on page 79, which challenges students to find several equatorial cities on a map. To extend, ask students whether each city is in the northern or southern hemisphere, and record their answers in a T-chart.



Rainy Math Weather forecasting at the equator is a snap—most days the outlook is the same: warm with a very good chance of rain. Students will learn more about the equatorial climate and practice their predicting and research skills with this activity. First, have teams of two students look up the average monthly precipitation in the capital city of an equatorial country. This information can be found online at www.weather.com. Then, based on these averages, encourage teams to predict how much precipitation will fall in one week. Students can check their predictions by recording the precipitation each day. At the end of the week students should add up their results and compare them to their original guesses. What accounts for the differences between their predictions and the amount of actual precipitation? As a class, graph all teams' results.

Countries of the Equator The equator passes through 13 countries: Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Sao Tome & Principe, Gabon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Maldives, Indonesia, and Kiribati. Challenge your students to create a display about these unique and varied cultures. First, have teams of two students draw the name of an equatorial country from a grab bag. Then, give each team the **Reproducible** on page 78. Invite teams to complete an illustrated brochure that tells about the country they have chosen. The brochure should include the country's population, official language, average rainfall, and a picture of the country's flag. When finished, fasten the brochures together in the order above. The result is a super-sized display that takes the viewer on a journey along the equator step by step!



COUNTRIES OF THE EQUATOR

Name of Country: _____

Average Rainfall: _____

Official Language: _____

Population: _____

Your Name(s): _____

Directions: You are about to become an expert on a country located along one of the most fascinating places on earth—the equator. Once you have chosen your country, use an encyclopedia or the Internet to research the information above. Draw or glue a map of your country in the box, and don't forget to color in the flag! When finished, glue this sheet to a piece of oaktag. Then follow your teacher's directions to create a super-sized display on the equator.

Teaching With the Best of Instructor © Scholastic, Inc.

Name _____

EQUATOR MAP HUNT

Directions: Solve the puzzle below by finding the cities and countries on the map where each pair of lines of longitude and latitude meet. Write the name of each city and country in the blanks next to its location. Then write the circled letters in order in the boxes.

LOCATION	*NAME OF CITY AND COUNTRY*
Longitude: 78 W Latitude: 0	_ _ _ (_) _ , E (_) _ _ _ _ _ _ 8 5
Longitude: 32 E Latitude: 0	_ (_) _ _ _ L _ , _ _ _ (_) _ A 2 4
Longitude: 103 E Latitude: 1 N	_ (_) _ _ _ P _ _ _ , _ _ _ G _ _ (_) _ _ 3 6
Longitude: 9 E Latitude: 0	_ _ B _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ , _ (_) _ _ N 7
Longitude: 36 E Latitude: 1 S	N _ _ (R) _ _ _ , _ _ _ _ A 1

SOLVE THE PUZZLE

What mystery object should you bring with you on any trip to the equator? Write the circled letters in order in the boxes below to find out.

(R)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

ANSWERS ON PAGE 2.