



## WHEN THE BORDER VANISHES

# Alexander von Humboldt's Journey to the Americas: A Game

### Standard:

- I. Culture
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change
- III. People, Places, and Environment
- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
- IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 7-12

### Objectives:

The student will:

- Identify the accomplishments of Alexander von Humboldt
- Analyze the impact of von Humboldt on the development and expansion of the United States
- Participate in the travels of von Humboldt

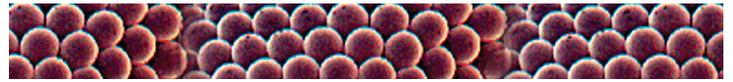
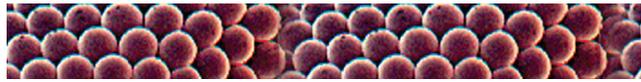
Time: 1-2 class periods

### Materials:

Game board (in three pieces)  
Game cards  
Game pieces for traveling the board  
A Die (Only to determine order of play/not necessary)  
Blank map of the world [located in the Toolkit]  
*Graphic Organizer: The Life of Alexander von Humboldt*  
*Map: Alexander von Humboldt's Journey to the Americas*

### Procedures:

1. Have students read a biography of Alexander von Humboldt prior to playing the board game. Selected sites:  
<http://geography.about.com/od/historyofgeography/a/vonhumboldt.htm>  
<http://www.macroevolution.net/alexander-von-humboldt.html>
2. Print all three pieces of the game board on legal size paper, in color if possible, trim, and tape them together. Create enough boards so that four students play at each board.
3. Create the game pieces, which students will use to travel the board. Copy the game board pieces so that each student will have a piece. Cut out the pieces. Fold in half on the solid line. Fold again on each dotted line. Tape or glue the bottom to make a triangle.
4. Divide students into groups of four. Based on the number of groups, make enough game cards so that each group has a set. Cut copies of cards to make the sets.
5. Set up the game boards with four students surrounding each board. Determine the order of play by rolling a die or another quick method.
6. Each player will draw a card and read aloud the information, then move according to the directions on that card. Each student should retain their drawn cards for later use.



7. Players will continue to play until one reaches the finish (End of travels).
8. If all cards are drawn and no one has finished, use a die to determine the numbers of moves.
9. Discuss what students know about von Humboldt once the game is completed.
  - a. What was his greatest achievement?
  - b. Did the students know about Alexander von Humboldt prior to this lesson? If so, how and when did they receive this knowledge? If not, why is von Humboldt not widely known in the United States?
  - c. Describe von Humboldt’s impact on the development and expansion of the United States.
  - d. Have students name scientists/explorers with whom they are familiar. Compare and contrast their accomplishments with von Humboldt’s.
  - e. Have students imagine traveling with von Humboldt. In which phase(s) of his travels would they most like to participate?
  - f. von Humboldt was an extraordinary observer of nature and societies. List the “job titles” (for example, scientist), that he could have put on a resume’.
10. Distribute copies of the Graphic Organizer, The Life of Alexander von Humboldt. Follow the instructions on the handout. Discuss the items the students selected as the most significant about von Humboldt’s life.

Extension Activities:

1. Use the *Map* of von Humboldt’s travels. Have students compare the map to a current map of the world to identify countries included in von Humboldt’s travels. Label the countries he visited on the blank world map. Refer once again to the biography of von Humboldt. Label additional countries where he traveled during his life.
2. Have students access the Humboldt Digital Library and travel digitally with von Humboldt: <http://www.avhumboldt.net/index.php?page=138>. ■



**NOTES ON THE GAME BOARD**

The images that appear on the game board have been selected from contemporary paintings and engravings to represent Alexander von Humboldt’s interests and accomplishments. They include:

- The study of indigenous cultures and peoples (both rural and urban such as Mexico City),
- Archaeology (Aztec, Mayan, Incan characters and ruins),
- “Modern” scientific techniques (scientific instruments),
- Exploration (waterfalls, volcanoes, mountains),
- Natural phenomena and record keeping (maps and statistical data),
- The Natural World (birds, plants, and animals); and
- Intellectual accomplishments, represented by his library, globe, and a copy of *Kosmos*.

The four corners of the board include images of von Humboldt at different stages of his long life.

- Lower right: an early self-portrait,

- Lower left: during his journey to the Americas,
- Upper left: as the accomplished scholar and author of *Kosmos*, and
- Upper right: as an elderly man.

The final five images, in the center of the board, serve as a summation of von Humboldt’s journey and its significance (from right):

- Data collection and analysis leading to an understanding of climate change,
- Exploration of the (then) highest mountain and the opening of new wonders to Europeans,
- Map-making and its effect on the settlement of North America,
- His visit to the United States and his enduring friendship with Thomas Jefferson, and
- The end of his journey and the beginning of his life as a world-renowned scholar.

Finally, the handwriting on the game cards is not von Humboldt’s but has been created from that of his close friend, Thomas Jefferson. ■