

MOVING THE ARIZONA STATE CAPITAL (2-5)

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to identify Phoenix as the current capital of Arizona and explain at least one reason why the capital moved multiple times before settling in Phoenix.

STANDARDS:

- **2.SP1.1** Create a chronological sequence of multiple events.
- **2.SP3.4** Gather relevant information from one or two sources.
- **2.SP4.1** Generate possible reasons for an event or development.
- **2.G1.1** Use and construct maps, graphs, and other geographic representations of familiar and unfamiliar places in the world; and locate physical and human features.
- **3.SP2.1** Explain why individuals and groups have different points of view on the same event
- **3.SP3.1** Develop questions about Arizona history, geography, government, and economics.
- **3.SP3.3** Identify and use evidence that draws information from multiple sources to answer compelling questions about Arizona.
- **3.SP3.5** Generate questions about multiple historical sources.
- **3.SP3.7** Present summaries of arguments and explanations using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- **3.C3.1** Describe the origins, functions, and structure of the Arizona Constitution, local governments, and tribal governments.
- **3.G1.1** Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in Arizona over time
- **3.H3.2** Use primary and secondary sources to analyze the changes that have taken place in Arizona, which could include the use of current events.
- **4.SP4.1** Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.
- **4.G3.1** Explain how the location and use of resources affects human settlement and movement.
- **4.H1.1** Utilizing a variety of multi-genre primary and secondary sources, construct historical narratives about cultures, civilizations, and innovations in the Americas.
- **5.SP3.7** Construct and present explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data.
- **5.SP4.2** Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.
- **5.G1.1** Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in the United States.
 - Key concepts include but are not limited to physical and human features of the United States, the regions of the United States and their characteristics, geographic location of major events, the growth of the United States through territorial expansion, demographic changes, and the states and their capitals.

CIVICS EXAM QUESTIONS:

- What is the capital of Arizona? **A:** Phoenix

TIMELINE: This lesson fits best when studying Arizona history or state government. Within the SPB process, this would fit best during the deliberation phase.

APPROXIMATE LESSON LENGTH: 45-60 minutes

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

- [Factors for Moving Circle Map](#)
- Map of Arizona showing Prescott, Tucson, and Phoenix
- [Capital on Wheels](#)
- [Capital Changes Timeline](#)
- [Arizona Capital Images](#)
- Listening Resource: ["Did You Know: The capital of Arizona moved 4 times before settling in Phoenix"](#)
- Video: [Episode 2: From Farmland to the Capital](#)
- [Push and Pull Factors for Moving](#)
- [Capital Name Cards](#)
- [Arizona State Capital Museum Website](#)
- Paper and drawing supplies for the evaluation activity.

VOCABULARY:

- **Capital:** The city where members of the government meet.
- **Territory:** An area of land that is part of a country but is not yet a state. Arizona was a territory before it became a state.
- **Legislature:** The group of people elected to make laws.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Engage

- Teacher: Begin by asking students if they have ever moved or if their family has moved. Using the *Factors for Moving Circle Map*, have students work in small groups to list reasons in the circle. Explain that cities can sometimes move important things, too. Discuss why people move (e.g., new job, bigger house, closer to family, school).
- Students: Share personal experiences with moving or discuss reasons why people move.
- Differentiation: For students who haven't moved, ask about a time they changed classrooms or seats. Provide opportunities for individual work or group work.

2. Explore

- Teacher: Show students a map of Arizona with Prescott, Tucson, and Phoenix marked. Present the *Capital on Wheels* worksheet. Explain that when Arizona was a territory, the leaders couldn't decide where the capital should be, and it would eventually move four times.
- Students: Look at the map and timeline. Circle the different cities that were the capital and the years they were the capital. Find this information by exploring one of the following websites;
 - LISTEN: Rodriguez, Nadine Arroyo, "*Did You Know: The capital of Arizona moved 4 times before settling in Phoenix*," KJZZ, September 26, 2014.
 - WATCH: City of Phoenix, "*Episode 2: From Farmland to the Capital*," *Putting a Stamp on Phoenix History*, March 21, 2024.
- Differentiation: Have some students work with a partner to trace the capital's path on the map.
 - Start by having individual brainstorm questions they might have about the capitals.
 - Allow students to explore support resources and/or do further research to find answers to their questions.

3. Explain

- Teacher: Tell the story of the Arizona Capital Images using the *Capital Changes Timeline* and map.
- Start by mentioning that Tucson and Prescott were the first places considered. Prescott was chosen first, then Tucson, then back to Prescott. Explain that leaders from different towns battled over where it should be.
- Mention the Civil War period when there were “essentially two capitals” because the territorial boundary was different. After the Civil War, the boundary looked like today’s Arizona, and Prescott was named the capital by the U.S. government.
- Explain the move to Tucson in 1867, noting it was a “well-developed city with more resources.” Also mentioned, it was seen as a way to ensure Confederate sympathy was gone from the South.
- Explain the move back to Prescott in 1879.
- Finally, explain the move to Phoenix in 1889. Discuss that leaders felt Phoenix was a good location because it was halfway between Prescott and Tucson. Also mention that Phoenix was a “rapidly growing and youthful town.”
- Emphasize that Phoenix was chosen through a legislative vote, and a permanent Capital building was built there.

- Differentiation: Use picture cards alongside explanations (e.g., a picture representing conflict for the “battled” part, a picture of buildings for “well-developed,” a picture of Phoenix for “growing”).

4. Elaborate

- Teacher: Connect the reasons for the capital moving to the reasons people move that students discussed earlier.
- “Why did the leaders move the capital from Prescott to Tucson?” (More resources, balancing representation/sympathy). How is that like moving to a place with better schools or resources?
- “Why did they consider Phoenix?” (It was in the middle, it was growing). How is that like moving to a town with more jobs or opportunities?
- Discuss the idea of balancing different parts of the territory or state. Why might it be important for the capital to be easily accessible to people from different areas?
- Students: Participate in the discussion, making connections between the capital’s moves and the reasons people move. Discuss why being in the middle might be helpful.
- Differentiation: For advanced learners, ask them to consider why representation from different parts of the state is important in government. Start to think about the SPB process and why providing diverse or multiple voices is important when considering project proposals and revisions.

5. Evaluate

- Teacher: Ask students: “What is the capital of Arizona today?”. Then, ask them to draw a picture showing one reason why the capital moved before settling in Phoenix. They should write a sentence explaining their drawing. Possible reasons to draw: leaders arguing, moving to a city with more resources, moving to the middle of the state, moving to a growing town, etc.
- Students: Answer the question about the current capital. Draw a picture representing a reason for moving and write a sentence explaining it.
- Differentiation: Provide sentence frames for the writing part (“The capital moved because...”). For students who struggle with drawing, they can explain their reason verbally. For advanced learners, ask them to include two reasons in their drawing and explanation.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Research the *Arizona State Capital Museum* website and its exhibits. What else can you learn there about Arizona history?

Learn more about the current Arizona State Capital building in Phoenix. What does it look like? What materials were used? What is the statue on top?

Discuss decisions made in the classroom or at home. How do people decide where to do something or what to do if different people want different things? How is this like the leaders deciding where the capital should be?

RESOURCES:

- Rodriguez, Nadine Arroyo, "[Did You Know: The capital of Arizona moved 4 times before settling in Phoenix](#)," KJZZ, September 26, 2014.
- Arizona State Capital. Arizona Memory Project, accessed 02/06/2025, <https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/nodes/view/251726>
- Arizona Capital Building- History and Architecture. Arizona Memory Project, accessed 02/06/2025, <https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/nodes/view/225>
- Thomas Black, "Arizona State Capital," Salt River Stories, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://saltriverstories.org/items/show/91>.