

Can Geography Save your Life if Godzilla Attacks?

Submitted to NCTA at the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado

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Lesson recommended grade level: 10 -11th grade

Estimated number of classes: 1.5-2 90-minute blocks with advance homework assignment

Lesson overview/ introduction: This lesson uses the geography of Godzilla's many attacks on Asian cities as a high-interest hook for students to consider the key geographic theme of migration, focusing on causes of migration and movement factors. Using internet information and selected viewing of Godzilla films (optional), students will identify the geographical locations of Godzilla attacks, selecting one for their project. Then, based on their knowledge of geography, geographic push-pull factors, and research into key geographic characteristics of their city and the surrounding region, they will work in small groups to determine a survival/escape plan for when Godzilla attacks their city.

Background: I have been lucky enough to take three different classes through TEA-NCTA with Dr. William Tsutsui, whose work was the inspiration for creating this lesson for my AP Human Geography course. One of the recurring themes in Dr. Tsutsui's NCTA courses was the historical meaning and importance behind the Godzilla films and their usefulness in historical study. Dr. Tsutsui discussed the Cold War anxieties in Japan in the 1950s, looking at political divides, the recovering economy, the forces of nature, and dangers of nuclear weapons. It became clear that the early 1950s Godzilla movies show a lot about human interactions and the environment.

This led me to examine how I could use the film in my AP Human Geography course. One point that stuck with me in Dr. Tsutsui's discussions of the 1954 original *Godzilla (Gojira)* was that most discussions of the film focus on the monster but, in reality, the majority of the film focuses on human response to the monster (NCTA class meeting: June 24, 2020). This point is what inspired me to look at how my students would respond if Godzilla were to attack. I decided to pick the locations that Godzilla had attacked in various films so I could discuss what actually occurred in the films. And, as an extension activity, talk to students about how the attempt to save people was successful or unsuccessful. Many of my students did not know where many of the cities in Asia were prior to this activity so, mapping was critical for my students to be able to complete the activity. Some students needed to do more research to learn about the surrounding areas than others to complete their safety plans and discuss the best options. This is likely due to my students range from 10th-12th grade my AP course.

I would recommend teachers have groups of various level students or be sure to build research time and clear steps to complete the activity. My students enjoyed creating safety plans for their cities and they were able to apply the geographic knowledge and concepts of migration push pull

factors. After this lesson my students examined refugees and asylum seekers and were able to apply their knowledge of migration to the next topic.

Lesson objectives/ outcomes: Students will be able to identify, understand, and apply knowledge of movement factors in human geography.

Ties to standards: AP Human Geography Units 2.10 Causes of Migration and 2.11 Forced vs. Voluntary Migration

Materials:

- Handout “Geography of Godzilla” for all students (two pages may be printed back-to-back or provided electronically)
- [Lesson powerpoint](#)
- You Tube Video “Migration-Why do people migrate:”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54xM8VlgP7s>
- Blank map of the world.
- Websites for Students to learn more about the city they choose:
 - <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>
 - <https://luminocity3d.org/WorldPopDen/#3/12.00/10.00> (Population Density)
 - <https://calculator.academy/population-density/>

Advance preparation: Before conducting the lesson, teachers unfamiliar with the history and plot of the original 1954 Japanese and 1956 American versions of *Godzilla* should read about these films. Two brief, interesting articles are:

- Dannie C. Bell, “Godzilla: A Crash Course.” *The Crimson*, April 15, 2021.
<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2021/4/15/godzilla-class-bill-Tsutsui/>.
- Juan Siliezar. “Round 2: Godzilla vs. Kong.” *The Harvard Gazette*, March 29, 2021. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/03/godzilla-grabs-the-spotlight-in-course-on-japanese-monsters/>

In addition, review the handouts and slide packet and make copies of blank world map. The slide packet proceeds step-by-step through the activity. Points of instruction and activity for each slide are provided below in Part II. Note that for Part I, students should be assigned to watch the *Godzilla* film at home several days in advance.

Procedure:

Part I. Introducing Godzilla

1. Introduce this extended lesson by asking if students have seen or know about the many *Godzilla* films that have been made. Can anyone tell the class about the very first *Godzilla* movies, when they were made and/or the plot?

2. If not, if students have access to the Internet, allow 5 minutes for students to research the first (Japan, 1954) Godzilla movie, called *Gojira* in Japanese. Otherwise, share the story of the first Godzilla films from the 1950s, highlighting the fact that Godzilla films can be studied for the complex relationship Godzilla and with his geographic and environmental surroundings. One continuing theme in Godzilla films is the monster's attacks on cities around the world, starting with his destruction of Tokyo. (See: Thomas DiFonzo et.al. "Godzilla: Celebrating 60 Year of Destruction..." *WSJ*. graphics.wsj.com/godzilla-60-years/#chapter=destruction. In this activity, the class will explore the geography of Godzilla's path of destruction.

3. Several days (or longer) before the lesson, distribute the Godzilla film watching guide handout, assigning students the task of selecting a Godzilla film to watch at home. Explain that, using the guide, students will be looking for geographic information in the Godzilla film they choose.

Part II. Slide pack discussion: Identifying, understanding, and applying knowledge of movement factors in human geography. Note: For copyright reasons, images of Godzilla have been removed from my slides, but teachers can easily insert great images from the Internet to capture student attention when using in the classroom.

Slide 1: Introduction for teachers.

Slide 3: Based on information on the slide, ask students why people tend to live where they do.

- *Some possible answers:* Early settlements: fertile valleys (Nile River Valley, Tigris and Euphrates, etc.); fresh water supply; temperate climate (not too extreme); places with good communication.

Slide 4: Review the concept of movement. Ask students what are some things that move?

- *Some possible answers:* People – move goods; animals, goods (resources, food supply, weapons); ideas (entertainment, news information, architecture); and Godzilla (while sometimes slowly).

Slides 5-7: Review essential geographic terms on these slides. Students may already be familiar with some terms.

Slide 8: Ask students to drag and drop or draw lines on the slides to match them to the correct category. Ask volunteers to share their answers in class discussion. Discuss why they put examples in the category they did. There may be some discrepancies with examples. For example, some movement involves people moving out of their country while others moved to other regions within their country.

Slide 9: Discuss the difference between push and pull factors noted on this slide.

Slide 10: Students will watch the short video linked in Slide 9 and take notes on why people live in certain areas based on social, economic and political factors.

Slide 11: This slide provides a map of China, with population distribution. Have students look for and identify:

- The most populated areas. Note that these areas are highly concentrated on the east coast and 90% of the population lives on just 30% of the land.
- Why students think these areas are the most populated.
- *Responses might include:* Physical geography, trade and commerce, Millionaire cities, core-periphery inequality.

Slide 12: As a class, discuss the question, “What makes movement challenging for humans?”

- Some possible answers: Landforms can create boundaries; political boundaries (border gate); cultural values; family size.

Follow student responses by asking, “What makes movement easier for people?”

- Some possible answers: Waterways, highways

Slide 13: Provide students with a blank map of the world. Ask them to locate and label cities/countries listed that had been attacked by Godzilla in the movie franchise history.

Slide 14: After labeling their maps, students will then look at the population density of the world shown on Slide 13. Students will want to take notes on the density of the cities they labeled on their map, as they will need to reference the population density map when making decisions in the assessment activity on Slide 15.

Slide 15: In preparation for the culminating small group activity, as a class, discuss what you would do if Godzilla were to attack. Consider the movement factors the class previously talked about and ask students to analyze them. Discussion points:

- How can you analyze these movement factors to help you survive?
- Identify points or locations – what are your options?
- How would you decide where to go?
- What connects the different locations? Highways? Open land? Waterways?
- How are you going to get to the location you chose to go to?
- Are there any patterns that occur over the connections?

Part II. Assessment of Knowledge: Applying Geography to Escape Godzilla

Slide 16: Assign students to work in groups of three or four. Their task is to devise a plan for what they would do if (when) Godzilla were to attack one of the cities that was a target in one of his movies, based on their understanding of geography, migration factors, and specifically, push and pull factors.

- Student groups will randomly draw a city based on the list of attacked cities in Godzilla films on Slide 12. Students may exchange with another group if they would like.
- Student groups will research their city to find population density, geographical features, connections to other locations, and patterns of movement. *Note:* If students have a hard time finding population density, they can use arithmetic density to figure it out on their own. *Arithmetic Density=Total Population/Total Land Area*

- After students complete research, they will need to decide what best options for escape if Godzilla were to attack the city and how to lead others to safety.
- Each group will share out this information to the class and be able to ask each other questions to determine which group has the most reasonable solution.

17. Extension activity.

GODZILLA

Film Watching Guide: The Geography of Godzilla

Pick one of the Godzilla films or shows to watch prior to class on (Insert date). Below is a list with links to free versions of the films. If you would like to watch a Godzilla film that is not on the list, that is fine as well. If you are unable to access any of these please see me as soon as possible so I can loan you a copy of one of the films or help you access it from the public library.

While watching the film take notes using the graphic organizer (page 2) to help you with the following:

- Geographical locations mentioned or shown in the film.
 - Describe the physical geography.
 - Describe the cultural landscape.
- What absolute and/or relative locations are attacked by Godzilla?
- How do people respond to Godzilla? Do responses differ based on different characteristics or roles of the people in the film?

Film/ Show Title	How to Access/ View (as of Fall 2022):
<i>Godzilla (Gojira)</i> (1954) This is the uncut Japanese original.	Free on YouTube Movies
<i>Godzilla, King of the Monsters</i> (1956) Original US version	Free on Amazon Free on YouTube Movies
<i>Godzilla, King of the Monsters</i> (2019 version)	Free on HBOMax and available at many local libraries.
<i>Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla</i> (1976) English language version	Free on Amazon
<i>Godzilla</i> (2014)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Godzilla</i> (2004)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Mothra v. Godzilla</i> (1964)	Free on Amazon
<i>Godzilla v. Gigan</i> (1972)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Godzilla v. Hedorah</i> (1971)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Godzilla v. Megalon</i> (1973)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Godzilla Raids Again</i> (1955)	Free on HBOMax
<i>Son of Godzilla</i> (1967)	Free on Amazon
<i>Godzilla v. Mechagodzilla</i>	Free on HBOMax
<i>Godzilla v. Kong</i> (2021)	GooglePlay or Apple TV (from\$3.99)

GODZILLA

Film Watching Guide: The Geography of Godzilla

Godzilla Film Picked:	
Geographic locations in the film:	Describe the physical geography:
	Describe the cultural landscapes:
Locations attacked by Godzilla:	Absolute Location:
	Relative Location:
How do people respond to Godzilla?	General Response:
	Responses that differ:
	Physical movement of people:

