Global Reach

You know that basketball is one of the most popular sports in the USA (as well as being invented here), but did you realize that it's one of the most popular sports worldwide, too? No passport needed for this activity as you'll explore the global impact on basketball.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- **A computer with internet access**
- **Paper and pencil**
- **Fantasy roster of players (included at end of this document)**
- **World map or globe (optional)**

This activity can be done individually or with a partner, as well as in a classroom or at home.



Did you know that basketball is not only wildly popular throughout the entire world, but that many Thunder players have come from all corners of the globe? Basketball is even the official sport of three different countries—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. In the 2023-2024 season, the NBA had players from 40 different countries and territories—that includes players from six of the seven continents! The OKC Thunder tied with the Dallas Mavericks in the '23-'24 season for the most international players on a team with eight apiece!

Today you are going to get to know something about some of these basketball-loving countries and the players that come from them. Begin by grabbing a map of the world. If you don't have a physical world map or globe, no problem! You can easily find lots of world maps online by using your preferred search engine.

Next, pick a country, and search for NBA players from that country. Not every country has a person playing in the NBA, so you may need to pick one or two countries. If you need help choosing a country, grab the list of International NBA Players 2023-2024 season that is included at the end of this document. While you have this list and your map, try to find as many of the countries on the map as you can. Notice how they're spread all around the world.

Now that your research and map-reading skills are all warmed up, you're going to gather data on a fantasy roster of international players. Also found at the end of this document is a list of ten imaginary international players with the position they play, their hometown, and the NBA city where they play.

Research how far each of the ten players traveled from their home city to the city of their NBA team and record this data in the table provided. Once you have all the distances recorded, create a new table. Organize the mileage data from Shortest Distance Traveled to Longest Distance Traveled. Then add up the total mileage that all the players on your fantasy team had to travel.

Were you surprised by the distance that some of these fantasy players traveled to get to their team's city?

GAME TIME

Now that you've gotten a handle on the geographic layout of these fantasy players' hometowns in relation to their team cities, you're going to dig a little deeper into these numbers and distances.

Begin by picking five players from the fantasy roster who you want on your team.

Pro Tip: Try to be strategic and pick five different positions to make your team well balanced.

Create a table with six rows on the side and six columns on the top.

Start by putting the position of each player and their native city in one of each of the five spots on the side. (Leave the top cell empty.) This is what your table might look like after this step:

Skilled Athlete Paris, France					
Fearless Driver Madrid, Spain					
Guard Abuja, Nigeria					
Expert Passer Beijing, China					
3 and D Sao Paulo, Brazil					

Next, you're going to use the skills you honed in the Warm Up section and your search engine to find out the mileage from each of your fantasy players' hometowns to OKC. (After all, you obviously want your players on the Thunder!) Record this data in the second column, like this:

	Home to OKC				
Skilled Athlete Paris, France	4,820 mi.				
Fearless Driver Madrid, Spain					
Guard Abuja, Nigeria					
Expert Passer Beijing, China					
3 and D Sao Paulo, Brazil					

Next, find a list online of all 30 NBA team cities in North America. You can find a written list, or you can search for a map of all the NBA team cities if you want to visualize it. When traveling for games, NBA players will often travel regionally so that they don't get too fatigued while on the road and going through time changes. You won't often see a Thunder player travel to Los Angeles to play the Lakers one night and then fly across the country to play the Knicks in New York the following night—although sometimes crazy things do happen with schedules!

With this in mind, choose three NBA team cities that you want your players to visit. You're going to calculate the mileage from OKC to the first city, the first city to the second city, and the second city to the third city; your players are not going to come back to OKC in between games. Write your chosen city info on the next three columns of your table:

	Home to OKC	OKC to Los Angeles	Los Angeles to Cleveland	Cleveland to Washington DC	
Skilled Athlete Paris, France	4,820 mi.	1,344 mi.	2,345 mi.	368 mi.	
Fearless Driver Madrid, Spain					
Guard Abuja, Nigeria					
Expert Passer Beijing, China					
3 and D Sao Paulo, Brazil					

Research the mileage from OKC to your first city and record that data in your table. Repeat this step for the other two NBA team cities you chose.

At this point your players are tired, in need of a break, and they each want to go home for a few days—and when they say go home, they mean their real home, not just back to OKC.

In the final column of your table, label your third city to home, and use your computer to research how many miles it will be for each player to fly from the third city you chose to each of their native cities.

	Home to OKC	OKC to Los Angeles	Los Angeles to Cleveland	Cleveland to Washington DC	Washington DC to Home
Skilled Athlete Paris, France	4,820 mi.	1,344 mi.	2,345 mi.	368 mi.	3,828 mi.
Fearless Driver Madrid, Spain					
Guard Abuja, Nigeria					
Expert Passer Beijing, China					
3 and D Sao Paulo, Brazil					

Once you've entered this final set of data, tally up how many miles each player traveled from the beginning of their trip leaving home to when they returned home. Write this at the end of each column for the appropriate player. Which of your five players traveled the furthest?



You learned a lot about geography and distances while creating tables and calculating mileages in both **Warm Ups** and **Game Time**. Were you surprised to learn that basketball is such a popular sport across the entire world? How did using a map or globe help you visualize the lengths which some players have to travel from their home in order to play for the NBA?

When you chose the three NBA cities for your players to visit, did you choose strategically? The NBA is actually broken up into both Eastern and Western conferences as well as six different divisions—Atlantic, Central, Southeast, Northwest, Pacific, and Southwest. This helps NBA planners optimize season schedules in the most efficient ways when it comes to distance and travel. How would you plan a schedule if you had 30 different teams who each needed to play 82 games in a season?



Given that you're such a good and friendly coach, your team really likes you! At the end of the season, they each want to invite you to their home city so that they can show you what their home and culture are like, as well as share some of their favorite traditional meals with you. Using your research skills, plan a trip for yourself that begins in OKC and flies to each of the five different home cities from which your players come. Can you visit the cities in a specific order to cut down on time and fuel, like traveling east to west? Or is there another path you could chart that would be the most efficient? What does your world crossing trip look like if you plot it out on your map or globe?

International NBA players bring such diversity and a huge range of cultures and heritages with them to North America. Using either the fantasy roster of international players or the list of international NBA players' home countries (both found at the end of this document) choose a couple cities or countries to research and learn more about. You could search for traditional food, music, clothing, art, or famous people who have come from that city/country, as well as anything else that you'd like to know about them.



In this activity, students used their internet literacy skills to research trustworthy map and mileage data as they tabulated that data into tables for analysis. By using both numerical representation of miles as well as the visual representation of a globe or map, the incredible distance some NBA players travel to be a professional basketball player was represented in multiple forms.

International interest in and love for basketball is part of what has helped it grow into the global sports phenomenon we see today. Though it was invented in 1891 in Massachusetts by James Naismith, and the NBA was founded in 1946, basketball actually began being spread throughout the world as early as World War I. Naismith himself spent two years in France during that time with physical educators who took basketball to the troops. The YMCA also had a major role around the turn of the 20th century in spreading the game throughout not only North America but the world as well.

By 1932, basketball had already gained such international popularity that seven national federations (Argentina, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia) founded the International Basketball Federation in Geneva (still known today as FIBA). The NBA also helped popularize basketball throughout the world, especially in the late 20th century with the immergence of such transcendent stars like Michael Jordan and the 1992 Men's USA Olympic team ("The Dream Team"). Nowadays, kids from all over the world play basketball recreationally and competitively and dream of being the next famous NBA star, and as seen by the 40 different countries and territories represented in the 2023-2024 NBA League, that dream is being offered to a broader and more diverse group of players than ever before.

OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Areas and Skills/Content	3rd Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade
Social Studies Students will identify the characteristics, distribution, and demographic patterns of human populations and systems of the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.			•	•
Mathematical Actions and Practices Develop the ability to communicate mathematically (use of data organization and analysis).		•		
Science and Engineering Practices Analyzing and Interpreting Data—Represent data in tables and/or various graphical displays to reveal patterns that indicate relationships.	•		•	
Science and Engineering Practices Mathematics and Computional Thinking—Organize simple data sets to reveal patterns that suggest relationships.			•	

Fantasy Roster of NBA Players

Player Position	Home City	Team City (USA)	Distance Traveled (Miles)
Guard (Magic)	Abuja, Nigeria	Orlando, Florida	
Wing Player (Jazz)	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	Salt Lake City, Utah	
3 and D (Nuggets)	Sao Paulo, Brazil	Denver, Colorado	
Defensive Stopper (Heat)	San Juan, Puerto Rico	Miami, Florida	
Expert Passer (Spurs)	Beijing, China	San Antonio, Texas	
Skilled Jumper (Bulls)	Paris, France	Chicago, Illinois	
Tough Backcourt Player (Suns)	Belgrade, Serbia	Phoenix, Arizona	
Fearless Driver (Warriors)	Madrid, Spain	San Francisco, California	
Defensive Mastermind (Rockets)	Athens, Greece	Houston, Texas	
Gritty Rebounder (Thunder)	Sydney, Australia	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	

International NBA Players / 2023-2024 Season

Country	# of Players	Country	# of Players
Angola	**1**	Jamaica	**1**
Australia	**9**	Japan	**2**
Austria	**1**	Latvia	**2**
Bahamas	**2**	Lithuania	**3**
Belgium	**1**	Mali	**1**
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**1**	Montenegro	**1**
British Virgin Islands	**1**	New Zealand	**1**
Bulgaria	**1**	Nigeria	**5**
Cameroon	**3**	Portugal	**1**
Canada	**26**	Senegal	**1**
Croatia	**4**	Serbia	**7**
Democratic Republic of the Congo	**2**	Slovenia	**2**
Dominican Republic	**2**	South Sudan	**1**
Finland	**1**	Spain	**3**
France	**14**	St. Lucia	**1**
Georgia	**2**	Sudan	**1**
Germany	**6**	Switzerland	**1**
Greece	**2**	Turkey	**5**
Israel	**1**	Ukraine	**2**
Italy	**2**	United Kingdom	**2**