

# Mascot Maps, with *Leo Belgicus*

Developed by Jenny Wyss

## **Lesson Description**

In this lesson students will learn about the *Leo Belgicus* map, a map of the Low Countries in the shape of a lion, which ties together patriotic European history and map making. In an activity based on thematic map making, students will explore the traits that unite a thematic map, as well as learn how to create a map legend to describe an imaginary place they design.

## **Time Required**

1 lesson

## **Grade Level**

Middle School (with adaptations for Elementary & Secondary)

## **VSC Interdisciplinary Connections**

### **VISUAL ARTS**, Pre-K-8

- 1.0 Perceiving and Responding
- 3.0 Creative Expression and Production

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**, Pre-K-8

- 3.0 Geography

### **Language Arts**, Pre-K-8

- 4.2 Writing

## **Lesson Objectives**

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

- 1) Examine the practice of map making and some of its history through the story of the *Leo Belgicus* map.
- 2) Illustrate a theme, specifically in regards to maps by designing a thematic mascot map.
- 3) Define the basic components and purpose of a map legend by creating one of their own.

## **Vocabulary**

**Map** -- a document that visually represents particular features of a specific place or thing

**Mascot** -- a person, animal, or object adopted by a group as a symbolic figure, especially to bring them good luck

**Theme** -- the unifying subject of a work of art

**Legend** -- an explanatory list of the symbols on a map or chart

## **Lesson Materials**

*For students:* Pencil, large drawing paper, eraser, black Sharpie or other dark marker, crayons or colored pencils, reference images of various animals (optional), worksheet (optional).

*For teacher use:* Image of *Leo Belgicus* Map (see “Downloads”, below), images of sports or school mascots.

## **Procedures**

### **Guiding Discussion**

- 1) Why do we have maps? What information do they provide? How do you use them?
- 2) Describe what we are looking at. (Show the *Leo Belgicus* Map -- allow many answers -- it is both an animal and a map.)
- 3) How is it different than maps you have seen before?
- 4) Why would someone make a map in the shape of an animal? What could the lion symbolize?
- 5) This lion is supposed to represent a country. What does that tell us about the country? What animal(s) do we use to represent our country? Why? What does this animal represent to us?
- 6) Where else do we use animals to represent a group of people or a place? (Sports and school mascots – having some images of these to share would be helpful.)

### **Exercise**

Have students think about an animal that could represent them, or be their personal mascot. Ask which of their personal qualities they would want to highlight with their animal mascot. For example, bravery may be represented by a lion, wisdom by an owl, etc. Have the students write 5 to 10 words to describe their mascot's characteristics (physical or personal). On the same sheet of paper, students should have the opportunity to do a pre-sketch of their animal before the next step.

*NOTE: See "Adaptations for Elementary Levels" for instructions that utilize the attached "Mascot Maps" worksheet.*

Once they have chosen a personal animal mascot, have the students draw the animal on large drawing paper with pencil so that it fills up most of the page. This shape will be their "country". The pencil lines can be traced with a dark marker.

When the drawing is complete, create a legend to describe the land terrains, using pattern or color to distinguish between them. Refer the class back to the *Leo Belgicus* map, or any map, to examine these features. For example, blue=water, yellow=land, green=trees, red dot=city, etc.

Finally, use the list of personal qualities written earlier to make place names for the map. These can correspond to existing "places" on the map, or new ones can be invented to enhance the individual qualities. Interior details (such as eyes, lines, or spots) can become lakes, rivers, mountains, or cities. The contour of the animal can become a coastline or national border. Use colored pencils or crayons to color the map according to its legend.

Attach the preliminary word list and sketch to the back of the map.

### **Closure/Assessment**

As a class, have students examine the work of their peers through a group reflection on the process. Allow students to share their work with their peers. Possible questions to pose:

- What is the purpose of a map? What is the purpose of YOUR map?
- How is the meaning or purpose changed when the map takes on an animal form?
- How did having a theme (physical or personal characteristics) change your way of thinking while making your map?

Students may also enjoy interviewing a partner about the creation of their map, and report back to the class with the answers. Possible questions to ask:

- What is your theme/mascot, and how does it represent you?
- If you were to live in this land, where would you want your house to be?
- What was your favorite step in designing this new land on a map?

When grading the maps, consider the following criteria:

- 1) Has the student defined the basic components of a map legend by creating and effectively using one of their own? There should be at least 5 corresponding symbols or colors evident between the map and the legend.
- 2) Has the student illustrated an understanding of a thematic map by including place names that correspond to characteristics (physical or personal) of their chosen mascot?
- 3) Students should be able to explain the purpose of a map, and how the meaning is changed when it takes on an animal form.

**Downloads** All downloads are available at [www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org).

- Image of *Leo Belgicus* map
- Worksheet for elementary: Mascot Maps worksheet

### **Resources**

**Examples from the exhibit, *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World*, on view at the Walters Art Museum March 16 – June 6, 2008:**

*Map of the Low Countries, Leo Belgicus*

**Images:** *Map of the Low Countries, Leo Belgicus*, Image courtesy of LaSalle Bank/ABN AMRO Dutch Map Collection

**On the Web:** For more information about the Leo Belgicus map, please visit:  
<http://www.themaphouse.com/specialistcat/leo/leo.html>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo\\_Belgicus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Belgicus)

**Adaptations**

***Elementary levels:***

Using the worksheet (above) titled “Mascot Maps”, have students think about an animal that could represent them, or be their personal mascot. Ask which of their personal qualities they would want to highlight with their animal mascot. For example, bravery may be represented by a lion, wisdom by an owl, etcetera. Have the students write 5 to 10 words to describe their mascot’s characteristics (physical or personal). Students should have the opportunity to do a sketch of their animal in the box on the worksheet. Follow the remaining steps under “Process” above.

***Secondary levels:***

Older students may find interest in making a thematic map that ties into a text from another discipline (like Language Arts), a thematic map focusing on individual interests based on creative writing exercises, or a thematic map based on their own personal history.

**Background**

Visit the Walters School Programs website, [www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org), for historical information about each of the maps displayed on the poster and within in the lesson plans.