

Experiential Neighborhood Mapping

Developed by Jenny Wyss

Lesson Description

Maps are fundamentally an individual or cultural representation of points of view. In this lesson, students learn about *John Smith's 1621 Map of Virginia*, as it was a method for communicating the special features and people of the "New Land" to the people back in England.

In the activity, students are asked to imagine that a traveler from a far off land is going to be visiting their neighborhood, and they have been chosen to make a map highlighting the important qualities of where they live, including the people and places that are personally significant or meaningful. This lesson would provide a good opportunity for art teachers to cooperate with social studies teachers.

Time Required 2 lessons
Grade Level Elementary, Middle, or Secondary

VSC Interdisciplinary Connections

VISUAL ARTS, Pre-K-8

- 1.0 Perceiving and Responding: Aesthetic Education
- 2.0 Historical, Cultural, and Social Context
- 3.0 Creative Expression and Production
- 4.0 Aesthetics and Criticism

LANGUAGE ARTS, Pre-K-8

- 4.2 Writing

SOCIAL STUDIES, Pre-K-8

- 2.0 People of the Nation and World
- 3.0 Geography

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) Describe a number of reasons that humans make and use maps.
- 2) Demonstrate what maps reveal about the individuals that make them by becoming map makers of their own neighborhoods and narratives.
- 3) Express, through making a map, the personally meaningful aspects of where they live.
- 4) Discuss how individuals perceive and portray the world in fundamentally different ways by examining a historical map along with the class' individual maps of their own neighborhoods.

Vocabulary **Map** -- a document that visually represents particular features of a specific place or thing
Mixed Media-- artwork that combines multiple art making materials; such as paint, collage, dry media, and etcetera

Lesson Materials 11" x 17" drawing paper, heavy weight
Pencils and erasers
*Colored pencils, crayons, watercolors and brushes, glue sticks, scissors, old magazines (for collage), any found images or photographs the students wish to incorporate.
* *This is a mixed media map, so students are only limited by which materials the teacher chooses to provide. It could also be done simply by drawing, or be expanded to include coloring techniques.*

Maps to display (See "Downloads" below for image files)
Virginia, 1621, by John Smith
Treasure Island, 1883, by Robert Louis Stevenson
Utopia, 1516, by Sir Thomas More

**Maps would best be displayed as overhead projections.*

Procedures

Guiding discussion

With the image of John Smith's *Map of Virginia* on view, guide the class through the following discussion. Ask for volunteers to record the class' responses to the questions in a flow/bubble chart, essentially "mapping" the ideas of the class.

- Describe the map you see before you. What is included in the map? What symbols do you see? What information is not included? How is it labeled? Which way is north?
- Where is this place? What clues does the map give to its location?
- What would the land look like if you were to walk through this place?
- Why are there people on the map? Who are they? What could they be doing? Why are they so large?
- What doesn't this map show?
- Is this a map for way-finding, or for storytelling? How can you tell? (Compare to ***Treasure Island Map*** and ***Utopia Map*** that both use exaggerated scale to show only select objects on the land. Make note, however, that the Virginia Map is different in that it is of a real place.)
- What does the map tell you about the map maker? Who are they? What do they value (what time or culture does this map focus on)?
- Think about your own neighborhood. What do you value about your neighborhood? How is that different from what this map maker values?

Exercise

"Imagine that a visitor from a far off land is going to be visiting your neighborhood, and you have been chosen to give them a map highlighting the important qualities of where you live. Include the people and places that are significant or meaningful to you. Consider referencing friendly neighbors, unique plants, interesting objects, mean pets (or nice ones), special views, important places, etc. (Where you learned to ride a bike, found a stray animal, make a new discovery, started a community garden...)"

This is mixed-media map making, which means that students should feel free to use any available materials (that the teacher chooses to provide) to express their ideas.

Further guiding questions may include:

- What qualities of your neighborhood make it unique or special?
- Will you include people, plants, buildings, or transportation?
- What would you want to leave out? Why?

Closure/Assessment

Ask the students to share their maps with the rest of the class by comparing and contrasting maps. The teacher may wish to also include the example maps (*Virginia*, *Treasure Island*, and *Utopia*) alongside the students' for comparison. Perhaps the students could exchange maps and write short answers to the following questions.

Questions about others' maps:

- Describe the neighborhoods you see before you. What facts does the map give to you, the viewer? (Are there many close buildings and streets? Does it illustrate plants and trees? Is it in the country, the suburbs, or the city?)
- What would this place be like to visit? Where does the map guide you?
- What does the map tell you about the map maker? Who are they? What do they value? How is that different from what you value about your neighborhood?

Students could write answers to a selection of the following assessment questions about their own map:

Questions about your own map:

- How did mapping your neighborhood help you to understand it better?
- How did mapping your neighborhood help you understand *yourself* better?
- What does this map say about where you live?
- What might an outsider viewing this map for the first time assume about where you live?
- What might the viewer assume about you, the mapmaker?
- How is a place affected by those who live there?

Downloads All downloads are available at www.thewalters.org.

- Historical maps to display:
 - *Virginia*, 1621, by John Smith, The Newberry Library
 - *Treasure Island*, 1883, by Robert Louis Stevenson, The Newberry Library
 - *Utopia*, 1516, by Sir Thomas More, The Newberry Library
- Example drawing of an experiential neighborhood map

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 Virginia*, John Smith, 1621, The Newberry Library
- *Map of Sir Thomas More's "Utopia"*, 1516, The Newberry Library
- *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson, 1883, The Newberry Library

On the Web

Learn about the history of Jamestown with interactive maps.
<http://www.virtualjamestown.org>

Images

- Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson, 1883, The Newberry Library
- Map of Virginia*, John Smith, 1621, The Newberry Library
- Utopia*, Sir Thomas More, The Newberry Library

Background

Visit the Walters School Programs website, www.thewalters.org, for historical information about each of the maps displayed on the poster and within in the lesson plans.