

Mapping the Past, Mapping the Present

Developed by Jenny Wyss

Lesson Description

Maps document changing times and places. They chart new territories, record diverse regions and populations, as well as the history of communities, nature, and development.

In this lesson, students learn about maps as historical records and about the people who made them. By comparing historical maps to modern day maps and images of the same places, students will learn how our mapping methods and views of places have changed over time. A worksheet is provided.

Time Required

1 class period

Grade Level

Elementary or Middle (with adaptations for Secondary)

VSC Interdisciplinary Connections

LANGUAGE ARTS, Pre-K - 8

6.0 Listening

7.0 Speaking

VISUAL ARTS, Pre-K - 8

1.0 Perceiving and Responding

2.0 Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

SOCIAL STUDIES, Pre-K - 8

3.0 Geography

6.0 Social Studies Skills and Processes

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) Demonstrate how to read maps in detail.
- 2) Exhibit the different functions that various map types serve.
- 3) Describe some ways that a map tells us about the person or culture that produced it.
- 4) Explain how individuals perceive and portray the world in fundamentally different ways by comparing historical and modern maps.
- 5) Recognize that places and their representations change over time by critically examining historical maps alongside modern maps and images of the same places.

Lesson Materials

Maps to display for comparison (see "Downloads" below for image files):

Set A: *Virginia, 1621*, by John Smith
Chesapeake Bay, modern day map

Set B: *British Control over North America, 1755*, John Mitchell
Eastern United States, modern day political map

Set C: *Jiangxi Province, 19th Century*
Jiangxi Province, modern day political map

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

Procedures

Display the first set of maps (listed under 'Materials', above) for the class to see. Present the *guiding questions* (1-3) for the first map of the set. Next, reveal the second map of the set, and present the same 3 questions for it, followed by questions 4-8 for a side-by-side comparison. Repeat for each set of maps.

Guiding discussion

1. Look closely at the map. Describe what you see. What is included in the map? What symbols do you see? What is not included? How is it labeled? Which way is north?
2. What place does this map represent? What clues does the map give to its location?

3. What clues does the map give you about the map maker? Who were they? How did they make this map? Why? What was important to them?

Drawing Conclusions

4. Compare the two maps of the same place. What different elements are emphasized? (Roads, cities, terrain, boundaries?) What purpose does each map serve? (Finding your way, or describing the landscape?)
5. How is the land on each map represented? What elements does each map show and what do you think is missing, if anything?
6. Which map do you think is older? Explain how you can tell.
7. Decide which map tells you more about the place you see. Explain your thinking.
8. What can maps tell us about the time and culture they came from?

Exercise

Students work in pairs to complete the worksheet, which is about comparing and contrasting three types of maps, and answering questions based on their analysis. (See 'Downloads' below.)

Closure/Assessment

As a class, discuss answers to questions on the worksheet, particularly the open-ended questions: 2, 5, 7-9. Ask the students to explain their reasoning.

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

- A worksheet is provided with questions about three maps for comparison and interpretation. STUDENT and TEACHER copies are available.
- Historical maps to display:
 - Set A: John Smith's Virginia
 - Set B: British Control Over North America
 - Set C: Jiangxi Province
- Modern maps to display: *Please copy & paste the following web sites to download and print the images:*
 - Set A: Chesapeake Bay <http://www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0506/feature2/map.html>
 - Set B: Eastern North America <http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/>
 - Set C: China <http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/>

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*, 1621, John Smith, The Newberry Library
- *British Control over North America*, 1755, John Mitchell, The British Library
- *Jiangxi Province*, 19th Century, The British Library

Web: Learn about the history of Jamestown with interactive maps. A great way to expand the historical component of this lesson.

<http://www.virtualjamestown.org>

View interactive global maps, and download additional map-based lesson plans from the National Geographic Society.

<http://www.plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/matrix.html>

For additional map comparisons, download this program to zoom in, tilt & explore the modern world in 3D. A great resource for satellite maps to use in comparison with ancient maps.

<http://www.earth.google.com>

Worksheet Images: Images “B” and “C” from <http://www.maps-of-china.net>

Adaptations

Secondary Levels:

Older students will also benefit from this exercise, based on the lesson objectives. Though the worksheet is written for elementary students, comparing the maps and images provided could lead to intriguing discussions for older students about the role that human development plays in shaping the landscape and our perceptions of how and what we record.

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.