



Reading and Interpreting Historical Maps

Strand Identification: V - Geography

NOTE: *Students will apply some of the standards listed above, depending on the map they select to complete the activity.*

A. Concepts of Location

Standard 1: The student will use directional and positional words to locate and describe people, places and things. **(K-3)**

Benchmarks: **1.** Students will describe the location of people, places and things by using positional words. **2.** Students will use maps and globes to locate places referenced in stories and real life situations. **6.** Students will compare distances between two or more places shown on a map with simple terms, such as farther and closer.

Standard 1: The student will identify and locate major physical and cultural features that played an important role in the history of Minnesota. **(4-8)**

Benchmarks: **1.** Students will locate major Minnesota ecosystems, topographic features, continental divides, river valleys, and cities.

B. Maps and Globes

Standard 1: The students will use and create maps and globes to locate people, places and things. **(K-3)**

Benchmarks: **2.** Students will recognize and locate the outline shape of the state of Minnesota on a map/globe. **3.** Students will create and interpret simple maps using the map elements of title, direction, symbols, and a map key or legend.

C. Physical Features and Processes

Standard 1: The student will use basic terminology describing basic physical and cultural features of continents studied. **(4-8)**

Benchmarks: **2.** Students will describe and locate major physical features in their local community and analyze their impact on the community.

Standard 3: The student will identify and locate geographic features associated with the development of Minnesota. **(4-8)**

Benchmarks: **1.** Students will identify and compare and contrast the landforms, natural vegetation, climate, and systems of rivers and lakes of Minnesota with those of other parts of the United States.

E. Essential Skills

Standard 1: The student will use maps, globes, geographic information systems and other sources of information to analyze the natures of places at a variety of scales. **(4-8)**

Benchmarks: **1.** Students will demonstrate the ability to obtain geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources. **2.** Students will make inferences and draw conclusions about the character of places based on analyses and comparison of maps, aerial photos, and other images.

Grade Level: K-8

Overview: This is a generic lesson on map reading, which will allow participants to examine the features of maps, and relate the map content to Minnesota history. Students will use a choice of maps to identify features, shapes, and boundaries of Minnesota through time. The historical maps will give participants the opportunity to follow the course of history in a visual format. Advanced students will be able to apply higher order skills by comparing and contrasting map information.

Time: The lesson time will vary depending on the number of maps selected by the participants.

Subjects/Topics: Geography/ History, Maps and Globes, Physical features, Concepts of Location, spatial interaction.. Topics may include boundaries, landforms and features, transportation, settlement, etc.

Required Materials: The participants will need the student worksheet, *Reading and Interpreting Historical Maps*, found at the end of this lesson. In addition they will need to view maps of the exhibit in person or via the internet.

Optional Technologies: Teachers may teach this lesson using the internet to view maps.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify landforms, water bodies, and other physical features presented on the map.
- Students will be able to decode symbols on maps and understand their relevance in the map presentation.
- Students will be able to analyze multiple maps to distinguish change over time.

Suggested Procedure: A pre-visit lesson should include the presentation of Minnesota’s physical size and shape to students. The teacher should identify Minnesota on a variety of maps at various scales, so students can identify the proper location and shape of Minnesota, on the continent, in the hemisphere, and in the world.

Suggested Assessment: Teacher evaluation of student worksheets.

▶ ▶ ▶ **RESOURCES**

Definitions:

Cartographer

National Geography Standards:

I. The World In Spatial Terms

Standard 1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Standard 2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.

II. Places And Regions

Standard 4. The physical and human characteristics of places.

VI. The Uses of Geography

Standard 17. How to apply geography to interpret the past.

Supplemental Web Links for Teachers and Students:

<http://www.macalester.edu/geography/mage/curriculum/mapsofmn/mapindex/index.htm>

Use this website to preview the maps before visiting the museum.

Extension Activities

- Students may select maps produced a century apart, or maps of a variety of scales. Ask students to compare and contrast these two maps. Identify features which are the same, and those which are different. Ask students to speculate or identify historical events that may explain the differences.
- How would a map of your community have changed overtime? Are there new features that would account for a map appearing differently?

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Reading and Interpreting Historical Maps—Student Worksheet

Tour the many maps of the Minnesota Historical Society exhibit and then select one map from the exhibit to complete this assignment. Answer each question with complete sentences using as much detail, and giving as many examples as possible.

What is the title of the map? (Be sure to give the complete title.)

When was this map created and who was the map maker? (Cartographer)

What place is shown on this map?

What drew you to this map? (color?, art?, symbols?, theme or topic?) What interested you in this map?

Which of the following map elements can you find on this map?

- Title
- Author (mapmaker or cartographer)
- Legend
- Date
- Direction indicator (Compass Rose or North indicator)
- Scale

Why are these elements important to have on a map?

What unique features are shown on this map? Are they physical features? Human features? How are they shown?

Some of these are very old maps, made with very different technology from what is available today? (No Google Earth) How did the cartographer know what to put on the map, and how did he choose what to include on this map?

What is the purpose of this map? Why did the mapmaker make it? Who will use it? (These are historical maps, some many 100's of years old. Who would have used this map and for what purpose?)

What does this map tell you about the place and time it was created? If you compared it to a current map of the same place, what would be different?

Using the map you have selected, trace a route on your map. Imagine you are traveling from one spot to another on your map. These are historical maps, so, keeping that in mind, describe your route to another student. Describe reference points along the way that are clearly shown on your map. Be as descriptive as you can, using elements from the map, like symbols and color, to help your partner identify your route. Can your partner find the route from your description?

What specific map terms did you use that were helpful in describing your route? Why were they useful?