

Storytelling through Maps

Lesson plan written by Erica Luetzow-Coward

Overview In this lesson, students will look at different types of maps from Senegal and use them for fact finding and to draw conclusions about life, the economy, and the environment in Senegal. Students will also create their own map that “tells a story.”

Essential Questions

- What is the purpose of a map?
- What stories do maps or globes tell?
- Why is having an understanding of maps and globes important?

Intended Grade Level 3rd-5th

Intended Content Areas ELA, Science, Social Studies

Standard Alignment with NC Standards

Social Studies–

3.G.1.1 Explain how the absolute and relative location of places impacts the development of communities.

3.G.1.2 Explain how climate and physical characteristics affect the ways in which people live in a place or region.

4.G.1.1 Compare the development of various geographic regions in North Carolina using geographic tools and representations.

5.G.1.1 Explain the impact of the physical environment on early settlements in the New World.

I.1.7 Construct claims in response to compelling and supporting questions.

I.1.8 Accurately use information from sources when making claims.

I.1.9 Make inferences from information in sources.

Science–

3.E.2.1 Compare Earth’s saltwater and freshwater features (including oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, and glaciers).

3.E.2.2 Compare Earth’s land features (including volcanoes, mountains, valleys, canyons, caverns, and islands) by using models, pictures, diagrams, and maps.

English Language Arts–

RI.3.5 Use text features and search tools to locate information relevant to a given topic Efficiently.

RI.4.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

RI.5.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question or to solve a problem efficiently.

Materials

- [Resource Slides](#) for classroom use including images of maps from Senegal to either display on smartboard or printed out
- [Map comparison chart](#) for partner work
- Glossary of map and geography terms as needed: [National Geographic online glossary](#)
- Sticky notes
- Optional: [Maps developed by the Senegalese government](#)

Suggested Length of Time 1-2 class periods of 45-60 minutes each

Prior Work to be Completed

Background knowledge of maps, geography helpful for comparison making

Procedures

- Tell students that you are going to show them some pictures and they have to tell you what all of these things have in common (they are all different kinds of maps). Discuss what the students notice or what purpose the maps have.
- Tell the students that a map is a drawing of the Earth's surface that uses colors, shapes, and symbols to show us where things are. Show students slides of Senegalese maps and have students in pairs fill out the [chart](#) below, modeling first as a whole group.

Map Title/Type of Map	What colors, shapes or symbols are used?	What is the map trying to tell you?	Does the map get the job done?

- Maps tell stories. Look back at the maps of Senegal and ask students what story a particular map is telling. Ask students what they would ask this map of Senegal if the map could talk. (Examples: “Why are your roads where they are?” “Are there other artists nearby? Why?” “If you could grow a new bus line overnight, where would you put it?”) Have students write questions on sticky notes and give questions to a different group to see if they can answer the question on behalf of the map.
- “A good map quickly shares visual information, but it can also tell a story of why people live where they do, why a border was drawn where it was, or why certain food is grown where it is grown. Today you are going to be a cartographer, someone who creates maps. What kind of story would you like for your map to tell?”
- Give students a large piece of paper and crayons or pencils and have them create a map with a purpose or a story to tell like the Senegalese maps that we looked at earlier. The students’ maps can be realistic, factual, or creative. For instance, you could have students create a map of favorite parks in your town, a map of student’s favorite places at school, places a character went in a story from ELA, most popular sports in different countries, a treasure map that incorporates three different biomes etc. This activity can easily tie into literature or science topics etc currently being studied in other classes.
- [“Me and the World”](#) by Mireia Trius has a lot of map-based infographics appropriate for children that might be a good springboard for geography-based maps.
- Have students share their cartography with others when finished.

Optional Extension Activities

- Encourage students to add other cartography features to their maps such as adding a compass rose, neatline (border), cartouche (title), legend or a key, scale, latitude/longitude lines, etc.