

Create a Country

Students apply geography skills to create a map of an imaginary country

Grade: 8

Time: 2 Days (40 minute periods)

Goals & Objectives:

Goals:

Depending on the grade and skill level of your students, the lesson might also incorporate different types of maps, including:

- political maps -- showing the country capital and large cities, states, or counties...
- physical maps -- showing the wide range of landforms in the country.
- color key maps -- showing average temperature, population density, elevations...
- natural resource maps -- showing locations of centers of agriculture, manufacturing, education.
- Topographic maps (with contour lines)

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- work in small groups to list features and elements found on a variety of grade-appropriate maps.
- develop a class list of map features and elements to draw from as they create a map of an imaginary country.
- include all the required elements in their maps.
- complete extension activities as directed.

Materials Needed:

- drawing paper
- art supplies
- a variety of maps from textbooks and/or other sources

Standards: 4.2.8A4, 4.2.8D1, 4.2.8D2, 4.2.8D4, 5.3.8B1, 5.8.8B1, 5.8.8C1

Procedures:

- Before you begin the lesson, collect a variety of maps that students will be familiar with. (The maps will vary according to your grade level and curriculum.) Arrange students into small groups. Challenge each group to look over a variety of maps and make a list of the elements that comprise those maps. Students' lists will begin with elements such as countries, capitals, boundaries... Give students 10 minutes to complete this part of the activity. Then gather as a class to share lists and make a class list of map elements.

- If students did not include landforms on their lists, direct them to think in those terms. Ask: What different types of landforms do you see on the maps? Add landforms -- such as rivers, mountains, deserts, and islands to the list.
- You might also talk about other elements that appear on maps if students have not already mentioned them and if they are appropriate for your grade level. Those elements might include a compass rose, map keys, and a scale of miles.
- When the list is complete, you might use a word processing program to type up the list as a resource for students as they do the activity.
- Finally, have students fill out the attached **Map Checklist**

Adapting the Lesson

As mentioned previously, this lesson can be adapted in many, many ways; it can include any area of the curriculum and involve many skills you might be teaching. In addition to the lesson adaptations listed above, here are a few more activity ideas:

- Create a fact sheet or an almanac page for the imaginary country. This sheet might present a wide variety of information and statistics about the country. As an example, share with students the [World Factbook](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html) (www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html) . Select a country from the drop down menu at the top of the page and see the kinds of information that might be included in each student's country fact sheet.
- Create graphs to show information related to the imaginary country (for example, populations of the largest cities, population or income growth over the last century, or value of goods produced by major industries). Students can use art supplies to create colorful graphs, or they might use graphing software or the online [Create a Graph](http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing/) (nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing/) tool.
- Write brief interviews with citizens from different parts/cultures within the country.
- If graph plotting and scale of miles skills are taught at your grade level, students can create their maps on graphing paper.
- Invent a currency for the country and create a chart to show equivalencies between the country's currency and U.S. dollars.
- Hold a culture fair in which each student shares her or his map with the class and tells about some of the cultural elements of the country's people.

Assessment:

Collect maps or have students present maps to the class.

Map Checklist

Please answer the following questions about your country:

1. How many miles is it from the country's capital to the nearest city?
2. How far is it from the country's capital to the nearest body of water?
3. Are there any mountains in your country? If so, how did they form?
4. What is the scale of your map drawn to? 1 inch = _____ miles
5. What is the scale of your map drawn to? 1 centimeter = _____ kilometers
6. In which direction does the river on your map flow?
7. Are there lakes on your map? What would happen if they flooded? Why?
8. How wide is the widest part of your river?
9. What natural resources are on your map? Where are they located in comparison to the capital city? Does this make sense?