

# 1A – What Is Geographic Inquiry?

MCCC SS060101 and SS060102

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Network – 2015-6  
Part A of Unit 1 – Foundations of World Geography

**GLCEs:** 6G121 apply skills of geographic inquiry; 6G123 interpret maps of natural features

## 1. Activity: Where should we put our town? (a powerpoint-aided simulation)

(30-45 minutes, depending on how many map layers you use and how many rounds of voting)

“Where should we put \_\_\_\_?” has been a fundamental geographic question throughout human history, at all scales from a gas station in Coldwater to an empire capital in Constantinople. In this activity, students are put in the role of colonists moving to a new life across the ocean. To choose a site for their settlement, they must engage in the process of asking geographic questions and acquiring information from maps. (PS. The choices turns out to be important places in American history.)

6<sup>th</sup> 1A Conditions and Connections Activity (three versions)

6<sup>th</sup> 1A Conditions and Connections Background 6<sup>th</sup> 1A Conditions and Connections presentation

## 2. Scaffolding or Summarizing Activity: Steps in Geographic Inquiry

(10-20 minutes, either before, during, or after doing the simulation above).

The revised Michigan GLCEs feature a lot of emphasis on something they call the “Arc of Inquiry.” The MCCC package includes an animated presentation about this process (see page list below). We think that teachers should have a lot of flexibility in deciding when and how to introduce this idea – we can make a persuasive case for doing it on the first day or postponing it until after students have had a shared experience with at least half a dozen different examples of geographic inquiry. Count the town simulation (#1) as the first one on that list of shared inquiry experiences!

## 3. Supplementary Activity: Definitions of Geography

(5-10 minutes) Have students try to come up with a short definition of geography, either before or after reading some of the definitions in MCCC. “Which of these definitions most accurately describes what we were doing when we were trying to choose a location for a town?” Here again, teachers might choose to postpone defining the discipline until students have done more examples. Say November?

## 4. Extension Activity: Diary of a colonist

(10-30 minutes) To meet a Common Core ELA goal, have students write a persuasive essay favoring a particular site for a town in Activity 1, or a “semi-fictional” diary of someone actually trying to build a house in a location they chose. Either of these writing efforts should reflect a clear understanding of the environmental conditions depicted in the maps.

## Pages from MCCC

### SuppMaterials.SS060101:

Pages 1-3 graphic organizer, big idea page, word cards

Page 4 definitions of geography (“Which of these definitions accurately describes what we were doing when we tried to locate our town?”)

Page 9 Graphic organizer – In activity 1 above, students were working at a community scale

Pages 13-14 course outline – for teacher background

(NOT 10-11, these pages are too much too soon and therefore take too long to do right.)

**SS060102.Powerpoint:** MCCC presentation on the steps of geographic inquiry

## Takehome: What is Geographic Inquiry?

Geographers ask “What is there? Why is that there? Why should we care?”  
(Or, “What is it like there? Why is it like that there? Why should we care?”)