

2A – How Can Maps Help?

MCCC SS060201

6th Grade Social Studies Network – 2015-6
Part A of Unit 2 – The World in Spatial Terms

GLCEs: 6G111 use maps at different scales; 6G123 interpret maps; 6G125 use GIS

1. Review location of ancient cities (Unit 1B)

(5 to 10 minutes, depending on how many maps you project)

6th 1B Ancient Cities Region

6th 1B Ancient Cities clickable map

2. Activity: Where do people live?

(20-60 minutes, depending on whether students use pencil and paper or a floor model).

This is an extension of the ancient-cities activity in Unit 1. Rather than a simple one-symbol-represents-one-city kind of map, this Lesson uses more abstract symbolic languages (1 symbol represents one percent of the world's population, and later 1 dot represents 2 million people) to show the pattern of population. A more complex clickable pdf allows us to compare the population pattern with factors that might limit population growth.

6th 2A World continent population activity

6th 2A World Population presentation

Dots, limits from 6th 2A World clickable population map

BI1 World clickable SimpleClimate

BI1 Chapter about World Map Overlays

3. Scaffolding Activity: Where are the mountains on each continent?

(10-20 minutes, depending on whether you use a floor map and/or ask for a single generalization sentence (“they’re in a line along the west coast”) or a more precise description (“and there are lower hills a little way in from the north coast and some more in eastern Brazil”).

6th 2Ax Where Are the Mountains?

6th 2Ax Mountain cutouts pair (to make model mountains to put on a floor map or tile map)

4. Extension Activity: The MegaGeology of the World

(10-30 minutes, depending on how much review of basic plate tectonics they need – the topic is also part of the science standards, and the students may already be familiar with the basic principles. This Lesson extends the knowledge to include some basic generalizations about potential mineral or energy resources.)

6th 2Ax Mountain Spatial Association

6th 2Ax World MegaGeology activity

6th 2Ax World clickable SimpleGeology map

5. Extension Activity: The Night-time Satellite Image of the World

(5-15 minutes, longer if you make it into a writing activity by asking students to make and support a generalization and/or describe some specific patterns that they observe and suggest hypotheses.)

Night Satellite Image layer on BI2 North America clickable miniAtlas

Pages from MCCC

MCCC SuppMaterials.SS060201 Page 3 Word cards; page 10 about map scale, page 13 projections

MCCC SS060201.Powerpoint has a good section about map scale with examples from Japan.

The background essay about maps is well written and worth reading for background (but note that the readability level is above grade 11 on several indices, not suitable for 6th grade). The story about a basketball is interesting but does not tie to any GLCE – moreover, ocean currents are a difficult topic this early in a class (i.e. prior to learning about global solar energy, temperatures, or winds), and we strongly recommend postponing the topic. Many other pages feature imaginary places, which we discourage for several reasons; our activities meet the same GLCEs with real places

Takehome: Geographic patterns can often be “explained” by looking at other maps and trying to find reasons why something does not occur everywhere. The more mental maps a person has, the easier it is to interpret a new map – the previous information allows better interpretation of new patterns.

It's like learning how to learn. Moral: start early, and build a solid foundation of useful mental maps. Population by continent, population clusters, simple geology, and simple climate are solid foundation!