



## WHAT'S IN A MAP?

What do maps tell us about our world?

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Students will analyze the many different maps in the *Cyrus Tang Hall of China* (or the online exhibition: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/> and draw conclusions about the purpose, audience, and potential bias in maps in general. Students will then have the opportunity to construct their own maps based on a specific purpose/audience.

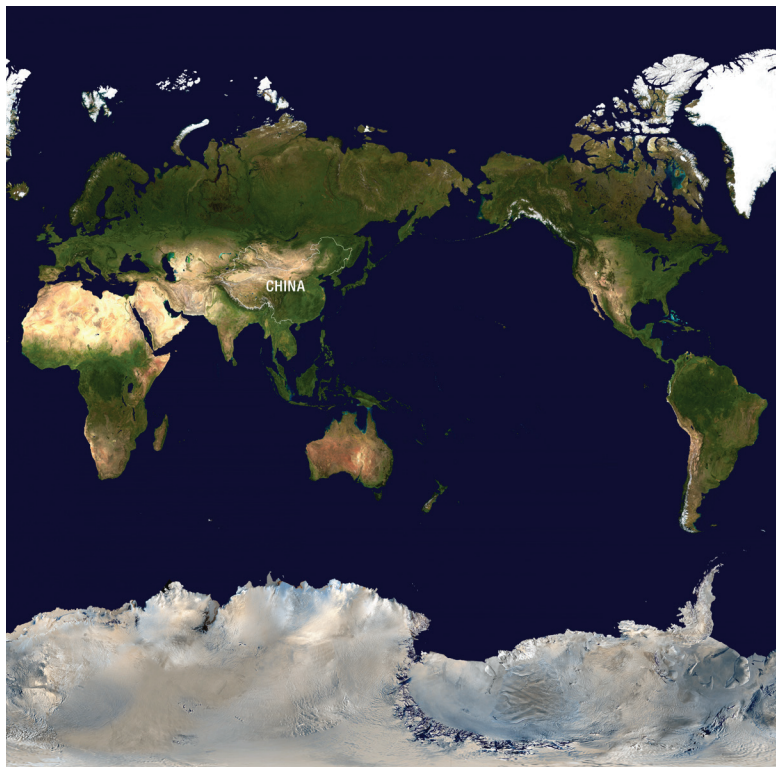
If you are planning to use this as part of a visit to The Field Museum, see the field trip guide on page 6.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Cyrus Tang Hall of China* features many different maps for a variety of purposes. Maps are both artifacts in the exhibit, and tools that add context to the story of objects.

When selecting a map for the entryway of the exhibit, the developers knew they wanted to find a map that placed China in its geographic context, with China in the center. Finding this map turned out to be a greater task than they imagined. It was hard to find a map that didn't center on the United States. This phenomenon is not unique to the United States. Students in China grow up seeing maps focused on China.

The maps around us, which seem like simple displays of information, can shape our view of the world around us, as much as we shape the maps we create. In this activity, students will interrogate the many maps in the exhibit, interpreting their purpose, perspective, and any bias they may hold--either conscious or unconscious.



**Keywords:** 6-8, 9-12, object-based learning, maps, discussion, world history, geography, cultural empathy, social empathy

**Lens:** history, geography

## COMPELLING QUESTIONS

What do maps tell us about our world?

Who makes maps?

Can maps be biased?

## OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze maps as objects of interpreted information.

Students will make conjectures about how perspective shapes the creation of maps.

Students will analyze the purpose of maps.

Students will create their own maps according to a specific purpose/audience.

## STANDARDS

### C3 Framework

**D2.Geo.1** Construct maps to represent and explain the spatial patterns of cultural and environmental characteristics.

**D2.Geo.6** Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures.

**D2.His.6** Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

**D2.His.13** Evaluate the relevancy and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose

### Common Core

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### CPS Framework Alignment:

**Grade 6**, Unit 1: Introduction to Geography; Unit 7: Rise of Asia

**Grade 9**, Unit 1: Introduction to Geography; Unit 2: Defining Power; Unit 4: Interrogating Power

## APPROXIMATE TIME

1-2 class periods

## PREPARATION NOTES

Students will be working in groups to explore content.  
You may consider pre-selecting student groups.

## OTHER MATERIALS

Access to museum content in exhibit or online:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>

Graphic organizer

Clip boards (in exhibit)

## OBJECTS OF FOCUS

Entry Map (pictured above)

Regions Map/Topographic Map:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/interactive/landscapes>

Excavating a Shang capital:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-2/case-201/g2-1 m1 b1/excavating-a-shang-capital>

Coin Map:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-2/case-204>

Changing Borders Map:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/china-through-time>

Qing Ming Scroll:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/interactive/qingming-scroll>

Map of Mount Putuo:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-4/case-404/g4-4 m2 b1>

Java Shipwreck map:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-5/case-503/g5-3 m1 b3/no-need-to-change-lanes>

## PROCEDURES

### ➤ Engage

To engage students' personal experience, start by asking where they see maps and how they use them.

Ask them, "Do you think maps can be biased?" Students can engage in this question as an open discussion, or go through a round of Think-Pair-Shares where they discuss their ideas with peers before sharing out.

Show students the first map in the exhibition, which features China in the center. Ask, "Is there anything different about this map than other maps you have seen of the world?" Take some ideas. Students may notice that China is in the center, and that the maps they usually see have North American in the center.

Explain that when developers at The Field Museum were making the exhibit, they had a hard time finding a map that featured China in the center. Ask students why they think that happened. You can also ask students why exhibit developers thought it was so important to have a map that featured China in the center. Why go through the trouble of making something like that?

### ➤ Explore (Questions and Inquiry)

Split students up into seven groups and explain that they will each be analyzing a different map in the exhibit. Explain that we use maps in our daily lives, and they are very important to describing the world around us, but that every map is made for a specific purpose. It's important to understand the benefits of using specific maps for specific purposes.

Walk students through the four main questions in each quadrant of their graphic organizer using the entryway map. As a group have students answer the following questions from the graphic organizer:

1. Describe this map.
2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?
3. What is the purpose of this map? Who would use it outside the museum?
4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?

Each group will have a few additional questions specific to their map below the quadrant.

Give the graphic organizer to each group and release them to analyze their maps.

Content can be explored in one of two ways:

- Visiting the museum in person
- Using the online exhibition: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>

### ➤ Explain (Apply Disciplinary Lens)

Each group will present on their map to share with the class. They can share out the answers from their notes and/or make a graphic representation of their map, and the class can engage in a gallery walk.

As a group discussion, ask: "What wouldn't you use this map for?" "What kinds of bias might be in these maps?"

Students can present their maps to the whole class, or they can work in small groups with people who studied different groups to share their findings.

## PROCEDURES *(CONTINUED)*

### ➤ **Elaborate** (Gather and Evaluate Evidence)

Now students can create their own maps. Choose a specific topic for their maps—either content from the exhibit, content from your classroom studies, or content from their daily lives. Have them plan first using the planning graphic organizer.

Students can work individually or in groups. If time permits, they can construct their maps, if not, planning the maps will reach the same objectives of understanding audience, purpose, and map construction.

### ➤ **Evaluate** (Develop Claims, Communicate and Critique Conclusions)

Students can use the evaluation form to provide feedback in pairs or with the whole class in a gallery walk to evaluate whether their purpose aligns to their map. Have students cover the “Purpose” section of their plans, and challenge the class to guess and describe the intended purpose of the map.

After students have received feedback, they can reflect on whether their own map met their purpose. Did their classmates guess the right purpose? Why or why not? They can also reflect on whether or not they think their maps are biased.

## ENRICHING THE LESSON

### **Background Knowledge Needed:**

Some experience reading maps will be helpful, though students don’t necessarily need thorough background on map construction.

### **Anticipated Misconceptions:**

Students may be surprised to analyze a secondary text (maps) in this way. The concept that every source they find has a specific purpose and potential bias might be a new topic of conversation to carry into further class discussions.

### **Methods to Build Empathy:**

#### **Cultural Empathy**

Students will develop a new understanding of bias, which will help them in perspective-taking and interpreting secondary texts.

#### **Social empathy**

Students will be working together in groups and forming consensus around critical cultural issues in China. This will require active listening, restating each others’ ideas, and engaging in discussion.

### **Opportunities for Informed Action and Contemporary Connections:**

As a possible extension, students can analyze other maps from news articles that represent bias, or limited information.

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## DIFFERENTIATION

### Extensions

For an additional challenge, students can analyze the maps in the other secondary texts in your classroom.

Have students explore the maps in other parts of the museum.

Share ancient Babylonian maps as a representation of how we make use of the information we have (which may be limited) to build maps: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian\\_Map\\_of\\_the\\_World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_Map_of_the_World).

## EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Google Earth/Maps: <http://www.google.com/maps>

Google Map Treks: <http://www.google.com/maps/about/behind-the-scenes/streetview/treks/>

Google Cultural Institute: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/u/O/project/world-wonders/>

## LESSON GLOSSARY

These concepts are embedded in the museum content and may be unfamiliar to students.

*pilgrimage* – a journey taken to a sacred place, usually as part of a religious practice.

*topographic map* – a map that shows features of the earth's surface using contour lines, or 3-D modeling.

*bias* – prejudice in favor of or against a thing or idea.

## NOTES FOR FIELD TRIP PLANNING

### Before

The “Engage,” section of the lesson plan can be used as a pre-visit activity. It might be helpful to share images of the maps with students before they enter the exhibit so they can easily locate them when they arrive. You may wish to show students how the Digital Rails work (very similar to the online exhibition Link: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>). The Archaeological Findings map located in the digital rail and linked above will likely be the most challenging to find.

### During

While in the museum, students can complete their map research described in “Explore”.

### After

After the exhibit, students will share their findings in the museum and engage in the planning and map-creation described in “Explain,” “Elaborate,” and “Evaluate.”



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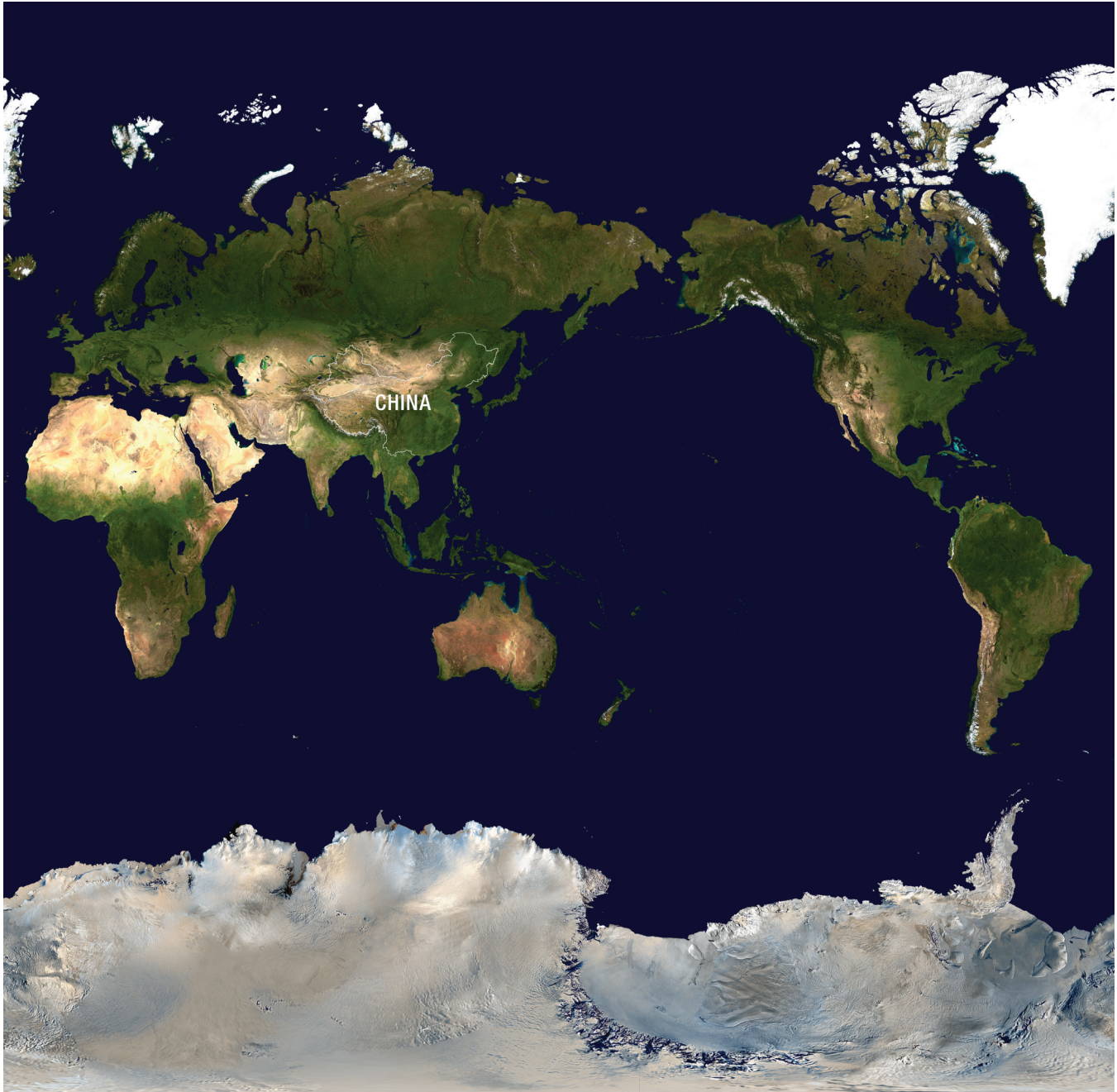
What do maps tell us about our world?

唐仲英中國館

Cyrus Tang Hall of



CHINA



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PRESENTED BY THE FIELD MUSEUM LEARNING CENTER

MAP ACTIVITY / CYRUS TANG HALL OF CHINA

The Field  
Museum

## WHAT'S IN A MAP?

What do maps tell us about our world?

Topographic Map/Regional map



1. Describe this map.

2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?

3. What is the purpose of this map?  
Who would use it outside the museum?

4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?

5. In surveys when people are asked about China, many people say that China is all pretty much the same.  
After seeing this map, what do you think?

6. What do you think this map is trying to prove?



## WHAT'S IN A MAP?

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### Archaeological Map



1. Describe this map.

2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?

3. What is the purpose of this map?  
Who would use it outside the museum?

4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?

5. What would this map *not be good for*?

6. What would you add to this map?

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### Coin Map



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Describe this map.</p>  | <p>2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?</p>                        |
| <p>3. What is the purpose of this map?<br/>Who would use it outside the museum?</p> | <p>4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?</p> |
5. How would this display be different if there was no map? What would we lose?
6. What other artifacts would benefit from being displayed with a map?

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### Qing Ming Scroll



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Describe this map.</p>  | <p>2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?</p>                        |
| <p>3. What is the purpose of this map?<br/>Who would use it outside the museum?</p> | <p>4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?</p> |
5. Is this a map? Why or why not?
6. Do you think anything is hidden in this map? If so, what?

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### Changing Borders Map



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Describe this map.</p>  | <p>2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?</p>                        |
| <p>3. What is the purpose of this map?<br/>Who would use it outside the museum?</p> | <p>4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum?</p> |
5. In surveys when people are asked about China, many people say that China has been the same for 5,000 years. After seeing this map, what do you think?
6. What do you think this map is trying to prove?

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### Map of Mount Putio



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Describe this map.   | 2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?                        |
| 3. What is the purpose of this map?<br>Who would use it outside the museum? | 4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum? |
5. If you were going on a pilgrimage, what information would you need?
6. Who do you think would make a map like this?
7. What information doesn't have to be on this map?

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### Java Shipwreck Map



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Describe this map.   | 2. What is the most interesting/surprising thing about this map?                        |
| 3. What is the purpose of this map?<br>Who would use it outside the museum? | 4. What can you learn from this map that you can't learn from other maps in the museum? |
5. How can maps show information we are not sure about?
6. Why is it important to know what information is missing?
7. What other maps might have missing information in them?



## What do maps tell us about our world?



Purpose of the Map	Intended Audience	Information to Include
Information to Exclude	Materials	Drawing (draft) <small>Final drawing on separate page/back</small>

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### Peer Feedback

1. What is the purpose of this map?

2. What evidence in the map suggests that?

3. Who would use this map?

4. Did this person understand my purpose? Yes / No

5. What did they understand? What did they miss? Why do you think that is?

6. What would you change about the map to make your purpose more clear?

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The China Educator Toolkit was generously supported by:

