Can My Life Fit on a Map?

Supporting Questions

1. What are map symbols and how do I use them?
2. What are cardinal directions and how do I use them?
3. What are the other tools on a map and how do they work?
4. How can I make a map of a real-life place?
1st Grade Maps and Geography Inquiry

### Can My Life Fit on a Map?

<table>
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<th>New York State Social Studies Framework Key Idea &amp; Practices</th>
<th>1.5: The location and place of physical features and man-made structures can be described and interpreted using symbols and geographic vocabulary.</th>
<th>Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence</th>
<th>Geographic Reasoning</th>
<th>Civic Participation</th>
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<td>Staging the Compelling Question</td>
<td>Brainstorm the components of the term “my life.”</td>
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#### Supporting Question 1

**What are map symbols and how do I use them?**

#### Supporting Question 2

**What are cardinal directions and how do I use them?**

#### Supporting Question 3

**What are the other tools on a map and how do they work?**

#### Supporting Question 4

**How can I make a map of a real-life place?**

#### Formative Performance Task

**Identify three or four map symbols and explain how and why they are helpful.**

**Write a paragraph describing how to locate an object in the classroom using directional vocabulary.**

**Complete an I Notice/I Think chart drawing inferences about the purpose of map features.**

**Based on a walking tour of the block or surrounding area, make a map of the area around the school.**

#### Featured Sources

**Source A:** 2nd Grade Understanding and Making Maps Symbols  
**Source B:** Image bank: Photographs and maps

**Source A:** “Learn about Maps”  
**Source B:** Image bank: Cardinal directions

**Source A:** Image bank: Maps and map features  
**Source B:** How to Make a Map for Kids

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#### ARGUMENT

Can my life fit on a map? Construct an argument supported by evidence that addresses whether or not all the parts of your life can fit on a map.

#### EXTENSION

Pick another place that is an important part of your life and research the natural and manmade features in and around it. Make another map showing this place and include a title, symbols, map key, and compass rose.

#### UNDERSTAND

Research a place in or near your school where there is an empty lot or unused land. Brainstorm a list of ideas for how to transform the space. From those ideas, create a map with a title, symbols, and compass rose to represent those ideas for using the space.

#### ASSESS

Bring the maps and ideas to a school or local official to review.

#### ACT

Conduct a fundraiser at school with the help of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or another group to raise money to create the selected project.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of maps and spatial representation, exploring how and why we depict the physical world the way we do on maps. The compelling question “Can my life fit on a map?” encourages students to consider our ability to represent real-world places on a map. In doing so, students explore the meaning and purpose of maps, the tools that help us represent places, the purposes of those tools, and how we use those tools to read and make maps. This inquiry provides a foundation for students to develop their geographic reasoning and map literacy, both of which are critical to understanding how humans interact with geography and geographic features across time and space. The manner in which students gather, compare and contextualize, and eventually apply evidence should enable them to make and support their arguments in response to the compelling question.

In addition to the Key Idea listed earlier, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understandings:

- (1.5a) Maps and map tools, such as legends and cardinal directions, can help us navigate from one place to the next, provide directions, or trace important routes.
- (1.5b) Maps are used to locate important places in the community, state, and nation, such as capitals, monuments, hospitals, museums, schools, and cultural centers.
- (1.5c) Symbols are used to represent physical features and manmade structures on maps and globes.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 30-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame might expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the requirements and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Can my life fit on a map?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence and counterevidence from a variety of sources.

NOTE: If a classroom-sized map is not available, an atlas or trade book may be used to supplement the images in the image bank. Likewise, if an actual globe is not available, Google Earth (https://www.google.com/earth/) or a trade book may be used to supplement the images in the image banks.
Staging the Compelling Question

Have students share and discuss the meaningful parts of their life (e.g., school, family, home, sports, shopping, entertainment). Is it possible to make a map that includes all of these things? Chart students’ answers and display the chart so students may refer back to it at the end of the inquiry.

Supporting Question 1

Supporting Question 1—“What are map symbols and how do I use them?”—challenges students to understand that anything, no matter how big or small, can be represented with a two-dimensional symbol. To explore the ways that geographic and manmade features can be represented through symbols, students work with featured sources (a video on symbols and maps and an image bank of photographs and maps) in order to compare and contrast real-life places and maps of those places. The formative performance task asks students to identify three or four symbols (e.g., the color green to indicate a park and the color blue to indicate rivers) used on the map of Manhattan and explain how and why using symbols is helpful.

Supporting Question 2

Supporting Question 2—“What are cardinal directions and how do I use them?”—initiates a discussion about location and the kind of directional vocabulary used to identify where things are. Teachers might want to begin by surveying students’ background knowledge of directional vocabulary. The formative performance task asks students to write a description, using geographic terms, of how to locate an object in the classroom. To build toward an understanding of cardinal directions, students explore Featured Source A, a short article that introduces the cardinal directions on a compass rose; teachers may also want to post signs with N, S, E, and W on classroom walls. Featured Source B asks students to identify the cardinal directions on two different maps.

Supporting Question 3

Supporting Question 3—“What are the other tools on a map and how do they work?”—asks students to integrate information from the featured sources and make inferences. The formative performance task asks students to complete an I Notice/I Think chart on which they list three to five map features (e.g., map scale, title, and colors) in the “I Notice” column and then complete the “I Think” column by listing their hunches about what the features represent. Students should have many options for this task through the features represented on the maps in the image bank provided in Featured Source A.
Supporting Question 4—“How can I make a map of a real-life place?”—prepares students to address the compelling question by reinforcing one of the key purposes of maps: representing the real world. The formative performance task calls on students to make a map of the area around the school after participating in a walking tour. Featured Sources A and B describe how students can learn to draw a map.

NOTE: Teachers may want to show students an image of the area around the school using Google Earth as a way to help them think about the elements they want to represent and the symbols and features they want to use to do so.

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### Summative Performance Task

Students draw on the understanding developed through the formative performance tasks to craft an argument that addresses the compelling question and is supported with evidence drawn from the featured sources. The argument can be presented through written expression or a combination of drawing and writing. To prepare for the crafting of an argument, students may gather their sources and notes and discuss, with a partner or in small groups, the relationship between the compelling question and the supporting questions and the featured sources.

Student arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- My life can fit on a map because every part of my life happens in a place.
- My life can fit on a map because I can use symbols to show all the real-life people and things around me.
- My life cannot fit on a map because my life has too much information to show on a map and because things change all the time.
- I would need many maps to show my life.
- Some of my life can fit on a map, but some places that are parts of my life would be hard to make a map of.

Students could extend these arguments by choosing another place that is an important part of their lives and researching the natural and manmade features in and around it. They can then make another map representing this place using a title, symbols, map key, and compass rose.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by researching a place near the school where there is an empty lot or unused land and brainstorming a list of ideas for how to transform the lot into something new or beautiful. From those ideas, students understand the problem by creating a map with a title, symbols, and compass rose to show their ideas for using the space. Students assess their ideas and maps by presenting and describing them to a school or local official. If the official concurs with the students’ plans, students act by conducting a fundraiser at school with the help of the PTA or another group to raise money for supplies needed to create the selected project.
Supporting Question 1

| Featured Source | Source A: PSDtechnology, video on map symbols, 2nd Grade Understanding and Making Maps Symbols, 2013 |

**NOTE:** This screen shot is the title image for the video on symbols and mapmaking.

Reproduced with permission from SchoolMedia, Inc. Available on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9nOie2mmr0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9nOie2mmr0).

## Supporting Question 1

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<tr>
<th><strong>Featured Source</strong></th>
<th><strong>Source B:</strong> Image bank: Photographs and maps</th>
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Image 1: Photograph of New York City.
© iStock / © dolphinphoto.
Image 2: Map of New York City.
© iStock / © crossroadscreative.
Learn about Maps
by Susan LaBella

Maps are pictures of places. Special drawings on maps help people use them.

A compass rose is a symbol found on maps. It shows directions. The compass rose has four main points. One point shows which way is north. Another shows south. Other points show east and west.

Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source | Source B: Image bank: Cardinal directions |

Image 1: Map of a farmyard.
http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/activity/sun-earth-and-cardinal-directions/?ar_a=1
Image 2: Map of a classroom.
Supporting Question 3

| Featured Source | Source A: Image bank: Maps and map features |

Image 1: Map of a park.
Image 2: Map of a community.
Image 3: Map of a city.
Used by permission of Rochester Community Schools, www.rochester.k12.mi.us. Map is not to scale. Rochester Community Schools not to be held responsible for misguidance. https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/pages/5033/district-map.
Image 4: Map of a mall
Supporting Question 4

| Featured Source | Source A: ReadWorks, article on making maps, “How to Draw a Map,” 2013 |

ReadWorks
How to Draw a Map

Did you ever have new students in your class? New students need to learn everyone’s name. They need to know where things are in the classroom too.

You can help by drawing a map of the classroom. Use a pencil and a large piece of white paper. Draw a square or rectangle.

Mark the places a new student may need to find. Draw a desk to show where your teacher sits. Show where the reading center is. Show where the science center is. Draw an X to show the door.

Now your new friends will have a map of their classroom.

Supporting Question 4

| Featured Source | Source B: Film Associates of California, video description of how to create a map of the neighborhood around the school, How to Make a Map for Kids, 1964 |

NOTE: Teachers and students can view this video by clicking on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bkd0poDm9rY

Charlie Dean Archives, YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bkd0poDm9rY.