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What Is a Map?

Maps are flat pictures of places as seen from above. They provide important information. Maps can tell you

- . . . how to get from one place to another
- . . . the distance between places
- . . . where places are located

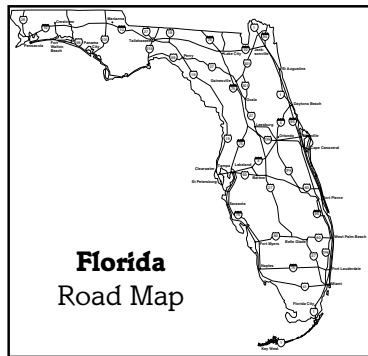
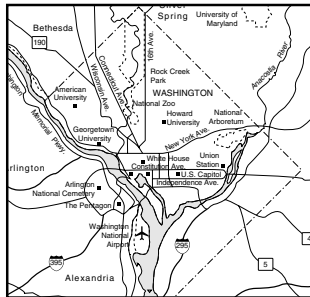
What are three other types of information you can learn from a map?

Maps can show a small area, like a room, a building or a neighborhood. They can include larger areas like a state, a country or the world.

Discussion Topic

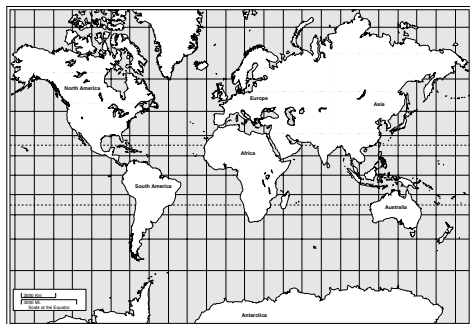
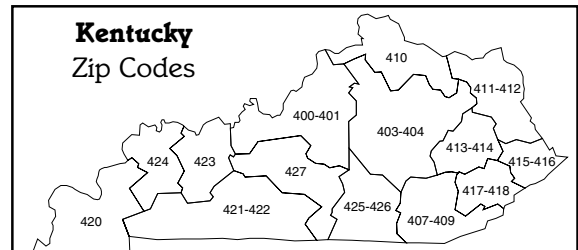
If you don't drive a car, fly an airplane or sail a boat, what good are maps?

**Washington, D.C.
Street Map**



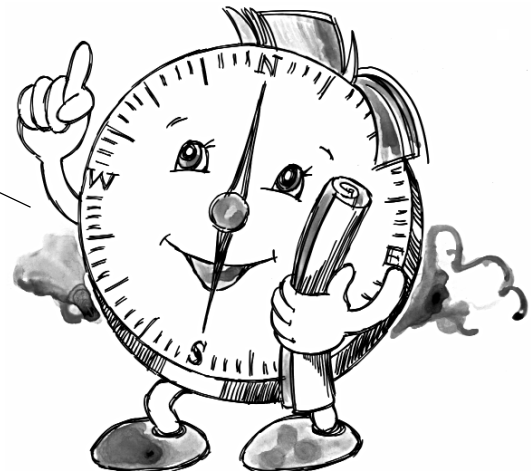
**Florida
Road Map**

**Kentucky
Zip Codes**



World Map—Continents

The word *map* comes from the Latin word *mappa*. *Mappa* means "cloth" or "napkin." Early Roman maps were drawn on cloth.



Mapmaking

If a map is a flat picture of an area as seen from above, how did early **cartographers** (mapmakers) draw maps?

Sailors drew maps as they sailed along coastlines. Some mapmakers drew maps based on what they saw while traveling or heard from other travelers. Another method was to climb a tall tree or a high mountain and look down. This gave the mapmaker a better view of a wider area.

Unfortunately, many early maps were not very detailed. Some were completely wrong. List some reasons why you think early mapmakers had problems making accurate maps.

Early maps were drawn on whatever material was available—clay tablets, animal hides, papyrus, cloth, tree bark, plant leaves and rocks.

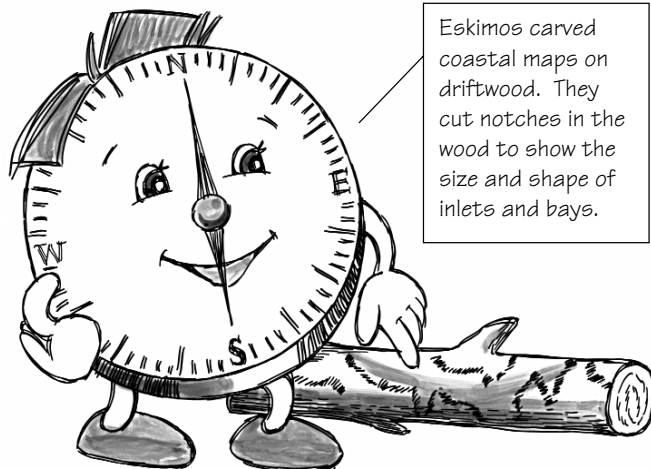
If you were at the beach without paper or pencil, how could you draw a map to show someone how to get to a restaurant a mile away?

Over the centuries the shape of the Earth has been described as flat, cube-shaped, a cone, a cylinder, a spiral like a spring and a flat plain surrounded by a huge wall.

The Greek geographer, Ptolemy (87-150 A.D.), is credited with drawing the first maps showing a round Earth. Using copies of Ptolemy's maps, Christopher Columbus searched for a shortcut to the Spice Islands of India. Instead of sailing east around the entire continent of Africa, he thought he could sail

west around the Earth. Problems arose because no one knew the true size of the Earth. Early cartographers thought the Earth was about 7,000 miles smaller than it really is.

When people invented hot air balloons in the 1780s, they could finally see the Earth from above for much greater distances. How do you think the invention of airplanes helped mapmakers draw even more accurate maps?



Map Titles

Most maps have titles. The **map title** tells you what types of information can be found on the map. A map title could simply describe the area shown on the map, like **The World, China, Nevada State Map** or **City Map of Paris**.

Map titles could also be more specific. For example, **Immigration to the New World 1600-1700** or **Average Rainfall in July in the British Islands**. When map titles are specific, you know what type of information you will find on the map.

Write map titles for each map described below. Keep titles short whenever possible, but be specific.

A map of Georgia that shows the annual production of peanuts in the state in 1995.

A map of the country of India showing the amount of rainfall during the 1692 monsoon season.

A map of New York City that shows places that tourists would be interested in visiting.

A map that shows where people who watch MTV live.

A map of the world showing the depth of the oceans and heights of the mountains.

A map that shows where in New Mexico you would be most likely to find rattlesnakes.

A world map showing where different types of dinosaurs lived during the Jurassic Period.

A map that shows rain forests and wetlands in South America.

A map of Asia that shows population growth during the last 10 years.

A map showing major battlefields of the Civil War.

By reading the title of a map, you'll know what type of information will be included.

