

Jean-Paul's Daring Adventure: *Stories From Old Mobile*

Overview

This lesson compares 18th century maps from two very different cultures: French and Chickasaw Native American. From these comparisons, students attempt to understand how these maps express cultural differences and similarities.

Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- Understand that there are numerous ways maps can represent the world;
- Apply compare and contrast skills;
- Gain a deeper understanding of philosophical differences between Western European cultures and Native American cultures;
- Appreciate the diversity of Native American cultures in colonial times as well as today;
- Recognize that today there are over 500 Native American Nations in the U.S. and even more at the time of contact.

State Standards

- Seventh Grade Social Studies Standard
 - Geography 1.) Describe the world in spatial terms using maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies.
- Eighth Grade Language Arts Standard
 - 12.) Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories). [RI.8.3]

Historical Background

Culture clashes happened continuously during the colonial period as Western European Nations (such as the French, English, Spanish, and Dutch) encountered many different Native American Nations (such as the Mobilians, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Chitimachas). Just like European Nations, Native American Nations each had and still have different cultures and spoke different languages. Hence, when the French befriended and came to better understand a Native American Nation, such as their allies the Mobilians, the social norms they learned could not be applied to all other Native American Nations. In the same vein, Europeans have different cultures and languages and don't all follow the same social norms.

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That said, we can definitely identify some common worldviews that apply to all Western European Nations, such as the colonial philosophy of the 18th century. The same is true of Native American Nations, who all share the worldview that everything in the world and beyond is interconnected.

A good example of differing worldviews between Western Europeans and Native Americans lies in the concept of land use and ownership. This is very well explained in the article: [Who owns the land? by David Walbert](#), (included in this lesson).

For the main activity, it's important to understand that Western cartographers sent maps back to their home countries with written explanations to help the viewer better understand them. This tried to make their maps as physically accurate to the landscape as possible. On the other hand, Native American maps were passed on with accompanying oral explanations, including discussion of well-known landmarks. Further, place names often reflected landmarks and other important visual clues from the land.

It is important to note that, while the two methods of map-making placed importance on different elements, American Indians had effective map-making and navigational systems long before European settlers came.

Novel Connection

In the novel (pages 19-20) we learn that Bienville has tattoos. This was not the norm in French culture at the time. However Bienville explains the cultural significance that tattoos have in some Native American tribes and how he ascribed to this tradition because he understood the cultural implications, that is, the honor that went with receiving a tattoo. In the pages that follow (pages 21-25) we get a glimpse of Jean-Paul with his adopted Choctaw family. Although Jean-Paul probably had some background and had been in contact with Native American peoples of various tribes, he must have encountered many traditions and customs that were different from his own as well as some that were similar. All the same, by living with the Choctaws, Jean-Paul came to understand and appreciate the Choctaw ways of doing and seeing.

Prior Knowledge

Students need to have a good understanding of Western European cartography and a clear understanding of the diversity of Native American tribes across the continent. They also need to understand some of the cultural differences that existed between European and Native American cultures.



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Activities

Warm-up Discussion

Begin by asking students what they think it must have been like for Jean-Paul to live with his adopted Choctaw family for three years. Ask them to brainstorm the things he might have encountered that were different than what he experienced at home (e.g. food, language, clothes, manners, etc).

Map Analysis

Think-Pair-Share – In groups, ask students to brainstorm all of the things a map can represent and portray. Encourage them to think beyond geographical landscape maps. Take up some of the ideas as a class. Emphasize that all maps, no matter what they are about, represent ideas and philosophies, which are rooted in worldviews.

Map Exploration Activity

Split the class into small groups and have students carefully examine the two maps: (1) Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississippi (Map of Louisiane and the course of the Mississippi), Guillaume de l'Isle, 1718 and (2) Chickasaw Deerskin Map, Unknown Chickasaw Native American, 1723). Please note that the maps can be seen much clearer if projected or if viewed online, where students can zoom in on the details.

Have students start with the French map of North America and compare them with maps today. How are they the same and how are they different? What places do they recognize? Have them make a list of the elements they can identify on the map (e.g. rivers, mountains, compass rose, animal drawings, etc.). Subsequently, have students do the same with the Choctaw map and identify all the tribes included on the maps.

Venn Diagram Activity

Once students have examined both maps have them fill in Venn diagram worksheet comparing the two distinct styles of cartography. Students should include at least three separate examples of how the two are different and at least two examples of how they are the same. Leave enough time for the students to discuss the comparisons and share their findings.



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For Further Discussion

Where do we see the idea of circles or cycles in nature or in life? Can they think of other circles or references to circles in life? (Examples: band of hope, wheel of fortune, life cycles, Arctic Circle, going in a circle, circle of light, circle of friends, Antarctic Circle, crop circle, circling the airport, round table, wedding ring, etc.)*
 How do they think the understanding of circles influences the maps?

If time permits discuss the reason that the American Indian maps use circles. Present the following quote and questions to the class:

"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round.

Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the Nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children."

—Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man, 1863-1950

Have students react to this. Do they agree or disagree?

How does the information above influence the way you view the Native American maps? Does this understanding of circles change the way you think about your environment?

* Betsy Norris, lesson plans,
<http://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/educators/lesson2.html>





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Extension Activities

Have students create their own maps. These should be of a place they know very well and that can either be easily recalled or somewhere they often go. Now that students understand the different ways Western cartographers and American Indian cartographers drew maps, have students adopt or create a method of map-making. They should consider what they want to convey and from there determine what should be included on the map and how it should be communicated. Students should include a few sentences on who the audience is for their map and why they chose the method they did. Regardless of the method chosen, each map should fill the paper provided, show scale, either proportionally (American Indian approach) or by a ruler (Western approach), and be detailed enough to provide clear directions.

To expand on the discussion of philosophical ideologies of maps, watch the video titled: *Chickasaw Maps: Geography, Relationships, and Power* (<https://www.chickasaw.tv/history/video/chickasaw-maps-geography-relationships-and-power/list/nations-collide-videos>).

Materials

- [Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi \(Map of Louisiane and the course of the Mississippi\)](#)
- [Chickasaw Deerskin Map 1723](#)
- Worksheet: *Venn Map Comparison*
- Answer Key: *Venn Map Comparison*

Extra Resources

- [History of Cartography](#) – an introduction to a series of books on the history of cartography
- [Maps, Map-Making, and Map Use by Native North Americans](#) – this is a chapter from the book *Traditional Cartography in the Americas* that provides numerous examples of American Indian maps

