

Mapping and Building Sense of Place

Age group: Middle School and Older

Time: 1 hour over 4 days

Big idea: Simply by making observations on the ground, you can make a map of your surroundings which might be different from other maps made by others.

Essential questions:

- What environmental/man-made features are the most recognizable aspects of your neighborhood?
- How does the map you made compare to other existing maps?
- How would a map change if the point of view of its creator shifted?

Students will gain a greater understanding of where they live through hands-on exploration and observation. They will produce a map that demonstrates these observations, framing them as a tool their very sharp but olfactorally challenged dog could use to get back home.

Step 1:

Where are we starting from (hypothesis)?

What do you think the area around your home looks like (within roughly a mile)? Draw a map without using any resources (especially paper or online maps) of what you think your neighborhood looks like.

Step 2: Exploration:

Scenario:

Imagine you have a family dog named Hobart. She is loveable but curious and tends to wander off when she is feeling like the house is too noisy. She has the softest ears, laser vision and can always hear the squirrels on the neighbor's fence. There is just one problem: she doesn't have a good sense of smell, so she can't rely on her nose to help her get back home. This time she has wandered about a mile away from your house, and although you know she hasn't gone far- you want her to find her way back.

As her loyal owner you want to help Hobart get home safely. In order to do so, your mission is to do a deep dive into exploring the area within a mile around your home and designing a detailed map to help Hobart!

Materials/Requirements:

- Compass (analog or electronic)—make sure it is optional for those that don't have access to a compass
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Paper
- Coloring utensils (markers, crayons, colored pencils, paints...)
- Feet/bicycle/scooter/skateboard/rollerblades/hoverboard to explore the survey area
- Storage bag/bin/box for nature artifact collection

Research

The investigation will be conducted over four days:

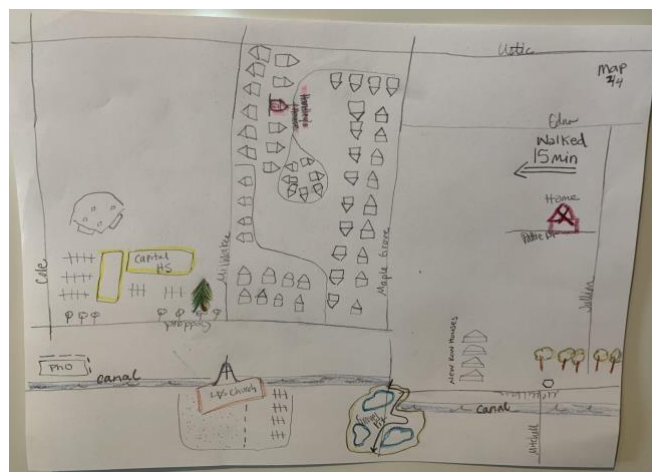
1. You will travel in a different direction each day. If you don't have a compass, make a purposeful plan to branch out in a different direction every day, starting with going right and left from your door, if you can.
 - a. **Parents:** if you have access to a compass, help your student orient themselves roughly along a different cardinal direction each day.
2. Walk (or ride, or scoot, or rollerblade, or pogo) in the general direction of the day for approximately 15 minutes.
3. Once you hit 15 minutes of travel, stop. Begin to retrace your steps.
4. Along the way, be mindful of the distinct features around you.
 - a. Is there a house that stands out?
 - b. What natural features are recognizable (someone's unique yard, a large tree, rocks)?
5. Record your observations in a notebook. Think about what Hobart sees and how the landscape and environment would be described by her if she could talk.
 - a. Your observations can take any form you want—you can use your words or sketch what you see.
6. In addition, write down any questions you may have based on your observations.
7. When you return home, draw the best map you can based off of the way you traveled. On your map, also include drawings of observations you made.
8. By the end of the week, you should have four maps that roughly line up with one another. If they overlap a little bit, that is ok.
 - a. If your drawings overlap, do they overlap perfectly? What do you think this means for our observation skills?
9. Repeat steps 1-8 three more times, each day traveling in a different direction.

Step 3: Interpretation and Product

Goal: by the end of this step, you should have a final draft product that synthesizes the four maps, with observations included, that you made over the previous several days.

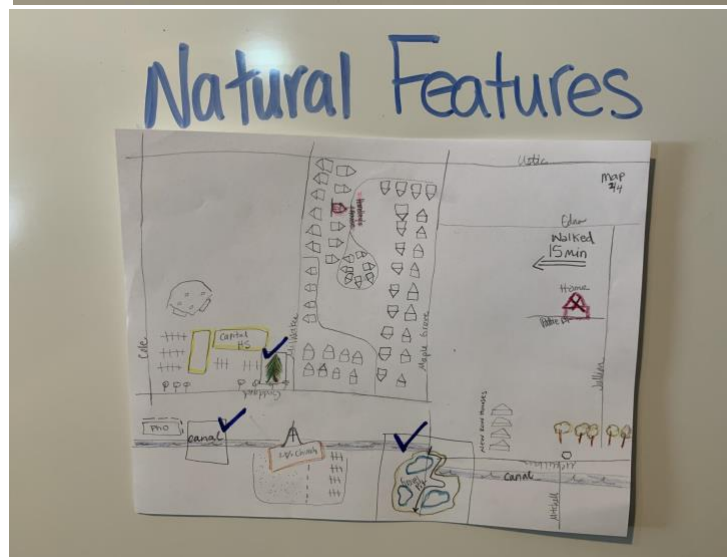
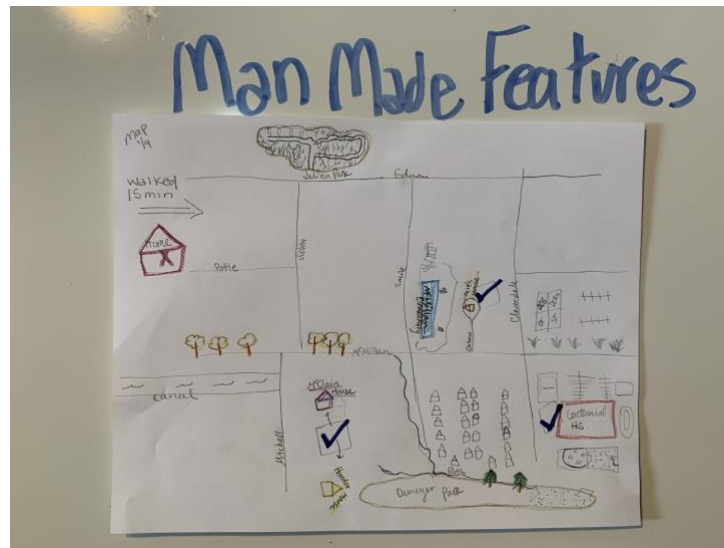
1. Choose two to four man-made and two to four natural features that stand out in each of the four maps you've made. These features will make it onto your final draft.

Example:



- a. Your final map should include eight to 16 of each feature type, man-made and natural.

2. Think about combining your four maps into one map that shows all four directions you traveled: are there gaps? What existing resources could be used to help fill in those gaps?
3. Once you have a clear idea of how to combine the four maps, start sketching the final draft. This should include streets with labels.



4. Add your features chosen in step 1 to your final draft map. Add color to your map in terms of the landscape and the features you chose. Make sure your map makes sense to you! It is ok if it doesn't look exactly like other maps you've seen.
5. Using existing resources, fill in any information gaps (places where roads don't line up, for example, or where the four maps don't overlap) to your map. Include street names and any other important labels that appear on other resources.
 - a. When looking at what's important on other maps, did you notice the same things when you were making your map? Is what stood out to you the same or different?
6. Using one of those resources, add a compass rose to your map. Which direction had the most detail?



7. Choose one of the directions and draw what you think is the best route for Hobart to take home if she was on the edge of your map. What features would she notice?

Example final map, with Hobart's route drawn on it:



Step 4: Reflection:

Is your map helpful to Hobart? What aspects of your map make it useful? Keep the responses to these questions in mind when writing your reflection.

Write a letter to a family member or a friend that you don't see very often. Tell them what you learned this week in your investigation and include your map, a copy of it, or a second drawing of it to go with the letter. Describe your favorite parts of the activity and how you would improve your map in the future. Tell them what else you've been up to while you haven't been in school.

Send the letter, and go for a walk! Enjoy your neighborhood.