



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2007 Volume III: Maps and Mapmaking

Santa Fe and the World: Maps and Mapmaking of People, Places and Poverty

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In a world of constant overstimulation, how do we get a student's attention and hold it? How does the teacher compete in the multi-dimensional world of iPhones, Ipods, and text messaging? How do we utilize multi-media teaching in assisting students to grasp complicated concepts? Like the early explorer who made maps as he/she entered unknown territories, the modern teacher can use maps to explicate concepts and make them visually available to students.

Maps, in so far as they use color and symbols, size and shape, are student attention grabbers. Historical maps, political maps and tourist maps all have a point-of-view. Data maps pretend to be representative yet they are distinctly biased. Maps of poverty average incomes to provide a synopsis of events, lives and 'a snapshots of facts.' They require critical thinking, analysis and imagination—powerful teaching tools.

Even more powerful is the hands-on process of mapmaking - because it engages students in research that allows them to experience information viscerally instead of in the abstract. Students will learn to make their own maps in which their local world is the center.

(Developed for U.S. History, grade 11, and U.S. Government and Economics, grade 12; recommended for U.S. History, Geography, U.S. Government and Economics, and Civics, grades 11-12)

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