

## **Maps from memory**

This was originally developed as one of the thinking skills activities by Nichols and Kinninert (2001).

As the title implies it is an activity involving recall of information shown on a map, although images and diagrams can also be used. The students are required not only to recall information from memory, but to be successful they must ‘think through’ the geographical information shown on the map or image to help to explain, or redraw it, for their peers. It is a good retrieval practice activity.

In the map activity students working through the three processes or steps they need to do in order to interpret and make maps. They must:

- identify the component parts (identify the symbolic representation)
- recognise what the symbols represent
- interpret the spatial distribution and what it means.

As an experienced geographer, when you are faced with a map, you are likely to complete all three stages instinctively and probably simultaneously. Your students are more likely to have to think about each stage, and some may get stuck along the way. Thinking about these three stages will help you to diagnose where your students are getting stuck and put in scaffolding to support them e.g. by informal questioning.

Maps from Memory is a fun activity that students very much enjoy. The teacher draws a map on a large flip chart that can be turned away from the class. Students work in groups of 3 or 4 and each group has a sheet of A3 paper. One from each group in turn comes to the master map and looks at it for 20 seconds and then returns to draw as much as they can remember for 2 minutes. Then the next student comes out – and so on. You can support students by suggesting they focus on a particular aspect – colour for example. It is an activity that can be used very effectively with students who have reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

Ward (2004) reports positively on using the activity in terms of improving memory and understanding concepts related to map representation. This activity can be adapted for all sorts of illustrative resources e.g. a diagram or photo rather than a map, but they need to be chosen carefully.

### **Planning and managing the activity**

- This is a good introductory activity for drawing annotated maps because it gets students to look at maps/symbols carefully and representing them.
- It can become competitive as students try to poach from another group. You need to establish ground rules.
- The groups with the best teamwork and a clear strategy will be most successful. You may want to brief them on this before they start, or let them work it out for themselves and debrief them afterwards on this.

- The debriefing should include both assessment of the success with their 'map' and reflection on how they did it. It is a good opportunity to consider metacognitive strategies. How would they approach the task differently next time?

## Reading

- Nichols, A. and Kinninment, D., (2001) *More Thinking through Geography*, London: Chris Kington Publishing
- Ward, R. 'Mind friendly learning in geography', *Teaching Geography*, October 2004
- Holbrey, C. and Parkhurst, L. 'Can engaging teaching survive the knowledge revolution?' *Teaching Geography*, Vol 45, issue 2, Summer 2020

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