

Map Making

Teachers Notes

Characteristics Of A Useable Map

Prior to handing out the sheet titled “Characteristics of a useable map”, review the following information with your class. If you can, encourage your class to enter into some discussion about this topic.

Suggest to your students that if they were to photograph our town/city from a satellite, the layout of the streets and buildings, and their relationship to one another represents the structure of the territory. If we produce a usable map from this photograph, the map must reflect the territory. In doing so, we allow users of the map to proceed from one place to another, with a high degree of certainty. This attribute we call prediction value.

Useable maps must have clarity, and be geared for the audience that will use them. Americans traveling in Europe prefer maps in English rather than in French, Italian, or other European languages for obvious reasons.

When the map and territory seem to disagree, we should conclude the map may err. If your map shows you as standing on a hill while in actuality you find yourself wading through an alligator infested swamp, you will undoubtedly accept the premise that this map does not reflect the territory.

A map shows only a small representation of the territory, and therefore cannot tell ‘it all’. When we prepare verbal maps, we must do it with a language filled with opportunities for misunderstanding. We can minimize the problems with verbal maps (directions) by making them as clear and concise as possible. When we provide verbal maps we should refrain from introducing extraneous verbiage.

“We make maps of places, things, people, and ourselves. I am handing out a sheet for you to keep in your notebook, or hang on the mirror in your bedroom. Make sure that the maps you make of places, things, people, and yourself fit the criteria of Characteristics of a Useable Map.”