



Lesson 4: Human Mapping

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Goal: Students will learn European geography.

Note: This lesson requires a large, empty floor. Move desks prior to instruction.

Activities:

The teacher gathers the students in a circle. She asks for 12 volunteers, and she passes around a box. Inside the box there are sturdy signs. The signs have string attached and can be worn by students. Each sign is the name of a European country:

Germany

France

Switzerland

Italy

Czechoslovakia

Hungary

Austria

Belgium

Holland

England

Poland

USSR

One by one each volunteer pulls a sign at random from the basket. The students read aloud the countries they've pulled. They put on their signs. When all the "countries" have announced themselves, the teacher offers instruction:

Today we will work on this big, empty floor to create a "human map" of Europe. Some of you will be the countries that comprise Europe. But first, I need four more volunteers.

The teacher assigns those four volunteers to become the directions on the human map. She arranges the four Directions—North, South, East, and West--and reminds them they must stand in place and anchor the map.

She distributes a few maps of Europe to students who are not countries or directions. These students will be the co-directors, the "mappers" who work together to arrange the map.

The teacher instructs:

Let's start with Germany.

Germany steps forward and the teacher and "mappers" find this student a place to stand, probably somewhere near the center of the floor.

Once Germany is standing in place, a couple of students use masking tape, on the floor, to shape a rough map of Germany. There is no attempt at detail; what's important is simply an approximate shape of Germany.

The teacher works with each country that borders Germany. France moves into place. The students with tape make a rough approximation of France, keeping its size roughly scaled to Germany's. Precision is *not* required.

One by one the European countries join the map until, finally England is placed at some distance from the other countries.

With all the countries in place and their borders roughly taped to the floor, the teacher leads a discussion of European geography on the eve of World War II. She may ask some of the following questions, or she may pose her own:

Look around. Notice which countries border each other. Does it make sense that Austria was the first country Hitler took over? Does it make sense that Germany and France fought over land?

Notice the relative sizes of the countries of Europe. See how large the USSR is? Does it make sense that Hitler wanted to conquer the USSR?

Consider distances. Look at England, away from the other countries. How did her location help her in her battle with Germany?

Once the students have had a chance to “become” Europe, the teacher lets them step away and swap roles and/or countries. This gives all the students a chance to become mappers, or directions, or different countries. The students reconfigure the map of Europe several times. When the teacher sees that most students have reinforced their learning through movement, she ends this activity.

She then distributes the students’ Holocaust journals and blank outline maps of Europe. She may also distribute maps of Europe, if she feels they are necessary. In any event, she offers the students instruction:

Work singly or in pairs to fill in your outline maps. Then paste them into your journals so you will always have a quick and accurate reference when we’re talking about the countries of Europe.

As she often does, she invites students to write any remaining questions on index cards. She collects the index cards as she circulates and helps the students create accurate maps.

Materials:

Twelve pieces of cardboard, approximately 6” X 4”

String for the Signs

A few simple maps of Europe, for the students who will be “mappers”

Masking tape for Mapping

Blank outline maps of Europe

The students’ Holocaust Journals