

# Mapping out the past

Tiffany Clark

Our Place in Time - Urbana Local History

Reading and Comparing Local maps through time

Children will understand how communities grow over time meeting the changing needs of their population and the affects of evolving technology. Second, they will be able to look critically and draw conclusions from resources.

Materials: A series of local maps will be used for this lesson, which will be done in two parts: county and city.

County maps to be used:

- Historical Map of Champaign County 1819-1940  
Champaign County Regional Planning Commission  
Karl B. Lohmann, Chairman  
Urbana, Illinois
- Map of Champaign County 1863  
Alex Bowman Architect and Civil Engineer
- Current County Map

Urbana City Maps to be used:

- Original Plat of Urbana Circa 1833
- Alexander Bowman Map of 1858
- Bird's Eye view of Urbana 1869
- Sanborn Map of Urbana 1897
- Sanborn Map of Urbana 1909
- Sanborn Map of Urbana 1923

Method: The children will already be familiar with reading maps from doing the map reading lessons earlier.

Prepare by covering any dates on the maps. Hang them where the whole class can see them clearly. Put the county maps in one part of the room and the city maps in a different one.

In a whole class format the children will order the three maps of Champaign County. This should not be difficult for them to do. The important part is the discussion/questioning that come next. The purpose of this is to articulate the reasons and evidence on which the children based their decisions.

Questions should include (but of course don't limit them to):

- What differences do you see?
- What things are the same?
- Can you find landmarks on all three maps?

How does the style of the maps change?  
Why do you think that happened?  
What do you think the person who was making the map thought was the most important thing to put on it?  
Why did the person make this map?  
Who is going to use this map?  
What makes something look old?  
What makes something look newer or modern?  
Why did people settle where they did?  
What made some towns grow and others die?

A class list (poster) of “clues” (features that indicate change/time/growth) should be made. This list can be used by the children when they are working on the next step, working in small groups to order the next set of maps.

Divide the class into small groups. I like using preset integrated groups for this activity. The kids already know each other, yet kids of differing skills can hear what the other thinks and the logic behind the choices. If your class is new to cooperative groups, I would suggest assigning roles such as note taker, materials collector, spokes person, etc.

Have the children look at the 6 maps of Urbana and work to order them. We are not so concerned with “right” answers but with the reasons they used to make their decisions. Each group must write down at least five reasons they ordered them the way they choose. (If they have extra time, they can come up with more reasons)

When each group is finished, gather together to present to each other their findings. Let each group articulate to the others what order they put the maps in and why.

Uncover the dates on the maps and show the children where these are located and how to look for them.

Assessment will be based on presentations and discussion. It is not individual, but rather general, primarily for learning rather than of learning. I will be looking at the level of critical thinking the children are able to achieve and if not satisfied, doing other lessons of this same style.

State Learning Standards: 16.A.2c  
17.A.2b  
17.C.2b  
17.D.2b