

Making Big Maps

Materials required:

- overhead projector(s)
- transparency acetate, 8 1/2 x 11", which can be fed through a copy machine (one type is *Apollo Audiovisual Transparency Film for Overhead Projection - PP100C* - clear, available at Staples)
- a simple outline map of the area under study with rivers but no writing on it
- permanent thick markers
- a *large* piece of butcher paper (or four pieces of chart paper taped together on the back) taped to a smooth part of the wall - 3' x 4' is a good size. The larger the map, the more engaging it is for students. Foam core board or cardboard are also good for making plasticene (clay) maps.

Procedures for outlining a Big Map

A. *Preparing a transparency for the overhead projector:*

'Choose or trace an outline map of any size. **There should be no writing on the map**, as the students will locate and name places themselves. If you cannot find an outline map, trace one from an atlas including context, such as neighboring countries, and significant natural features, such as rivers and mountains.

Place your outline map on a copy machine and run a sheet of transparency acetate through the machine as if it was ordinary paper - the traced image will appear on the acetate exactly like a xerox copy!

B. *Before students arrive in class:*

Tape a large piece of butcher paper onto a smooth wall (wrinkles result in inaccuracies right from the beginning). OR, use a large flat piece of cardboard or foam-core board suspended vertically against a hard surface.

Using the overhead projector, focus the transparency on the paper, adjusting the projector until the map fills the entire space. Tape the transparency to the surface of the projector and place the projector on a chair. It is essential that this arrangement not be inadvertently moved once the students begin to trace the image onto the butcher paper because it is very hard to reposition the image once it has been disturbed.

C. *Students trace the big map onto paper or board using permanent markers:*

While class completes an assignment using 8 1/2 x 11 copies of the map, call two students at a time to begin tracing the outline map with the permanent marker. Tracing the whole outline should take no more than 20 - 30 minutes. Now you have a template on which students can add features (names of places, pictures of animals, tools, crops etc.) as they learn about them, so that the "story" on the Big Map grows richer and more complete as the unit progresses.