

# Reading North Carolina Maps

A Lesson Plan Prepared for Use with *North Carolina Maps*:

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/>

## **An Introduction to Reading North Carolina Maps**

In this lesson, students are introduced to the language of maps and why maps are important in our world. They are given the opportunity to read simple maps and find major features of more complicated maps.

## **Time Required for the Lesson**

Between 20 and 50 minutes, depending on the level of instruction

## **Materials/Resources**

Projector or Whiteboard for the definitions and instruction

Computer access for the requisite maps

## **Activities**

- I. Depending on level of instruction, the teacher should introduce the students to the following definitions:

**Map**—A map is more than just a picture of a place. A map is a visual representation; it has words to identify places and symbols to identify different features (railroads, streams, churches, etc.). A map is made to give the reader a sense of a place. Maps are also created for a purpose; in other words, every map does not show everything about a place, otherwise it would be too hard to read. A map may be made to show land, to show streets for directions, to show transportation (like a bus map), or any number of other things.

**Cartography**—mapmaking. A *cartographer* makes maps.

**Orientation**—This is how a reader knows the direction of the map. Cartographers usually put North at the top; if not, he may use a *compass rose* to show the direction of north.

**Scale**—Maps are intentionally smaller than the area they show. The cartographer will use a scale, or a ratio, to show how many miles (or kilometers or feet) equal some length on the map. For instance, one inch may equal ten miles on a map of North Carolina, or one mile on a map of Charlotte.

**Legend**—This is the list of symbols used on the map and what they mean. A cartographer may color areas differently to show water or dry land or roads. The legend shows what those colors mean.

**Latitude**—a set of lines drawn horizontally to show where on the globe (representation of the Earth) a map is showing.

**Longitude**—a set of lines drawn vertically to place a map on a globe. Latitude and Longitude are measured in *degrees*.

2. Project the Rail Road map located at [http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/index\\_images.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps/index_images.html) on a screen. (Teachers without access to an LCD projector can also ask advanced students to bring the map up on computer screens.) Ask students to answer the following questions and explain their answers:

- What is the title of this map? (Railroad Map of North Carolina)
- What is the date of this map? (1900)
- Why was this map made? (sample answer: so people would know the routes of the trains)
- Which way is North? (Pointing to the top) Which way is South? East? West?
- Zoom in on the legend of the map (bottom right corner). What color is the Atlantic Coast Line? (Green) What color is the Southern Railway Line? (Red)
- What else does this map tell the reader? (sample answers: terminal stops, mileage)
- Can you find the county where you live on this map? Describe where it is on the map (sample answers: close to the ocean, in the south, at the top)

3. Have students complete the handout (.pdf). Activity Two is more advanced than Activity One. You may decide to create a list of links so students don't have to type in the URLs.

### **Assessment**

Teachers may take up the handouts to assess progress.

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*North Carolina Maps* is a comprehensive, online collection of historic maps from the North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, and Outer Banks History Center. *North Carolina Maps* is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the State Library of North Carolina. Visit *North Carolina Maps* online at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps>.