

Mapping Our Designed Environment

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Background/Intent

We all soak in our environment in different ways. For instance, a musician might attend a movie for the first time and only hear the soundtrack. An actor may notice character development. A set designer could be focused on the physical arrangement of objects. Those with no specialized knowledge may tune into the general story without noticing the music or the set design. In the same way, we are often oblivious to the designed worlds around us until we bring them into focus, something this activity illustrates. By combining views, senses and information, we create an awareness of a larger picture.

Roaming through, across, and underneath this activity is a concept: how layers of design compose our built environment and influence our daily experience. Articulating these layers are features placed upon features: objects and technologies, signs and signals, sounds and smells. Mapping these features reveals patterns and histories of use, applications of specialized knowledge, and records of relationships and interactions as they change over time -- all of which are suggestive of ever deepening complexity. Swallowing such complexity in one dose is at odds with another design: the conservative apparatus of our minds, which so readily responds to deluges of information by focusing our awareness on that which will most efficiently meet our needs, that with which we agree, and that which offers the highest reward for our attention.

"Mapping Our Designed Environment" is conceptual, but the process and outcome are physical. The clear sheets of acetate when layered or peeled illuminate the metaphor behind this activity, helping to track individual paths and showing where those paths overlap or diverge. The final result itself can be seen as a work of art.

Mapping may be extended and recycled in many directions, including:

- Topographical maps of personal experience such as the paths most frequently traveled;

- Layered self-portraits about how we choose to reveal ourselves to which groups – public or private;

- Environmental self-portraits with different symbols or colors can show emotional or utilitarian relationships to the spaces around us;

- Interactive digital maps can be created with voice-overs to add a multimedia component to mapping.

Grade Level (s)

5-12

Time Span

30 minutes

Essential Question

How does what we notice influence our experience of the designed environment around us?

Provoking Questions

What do we notice about our environment?

Does recognizing our environment influence how we participate in it?

Once we recognize what is around us, do we see/use it differently?

Lesson Objectives

Learners will analyze an identified environment

Learners will create a map that shows items of significance

Learners will gain an awareness of how selected items of significance for one person (group) interrelate with others

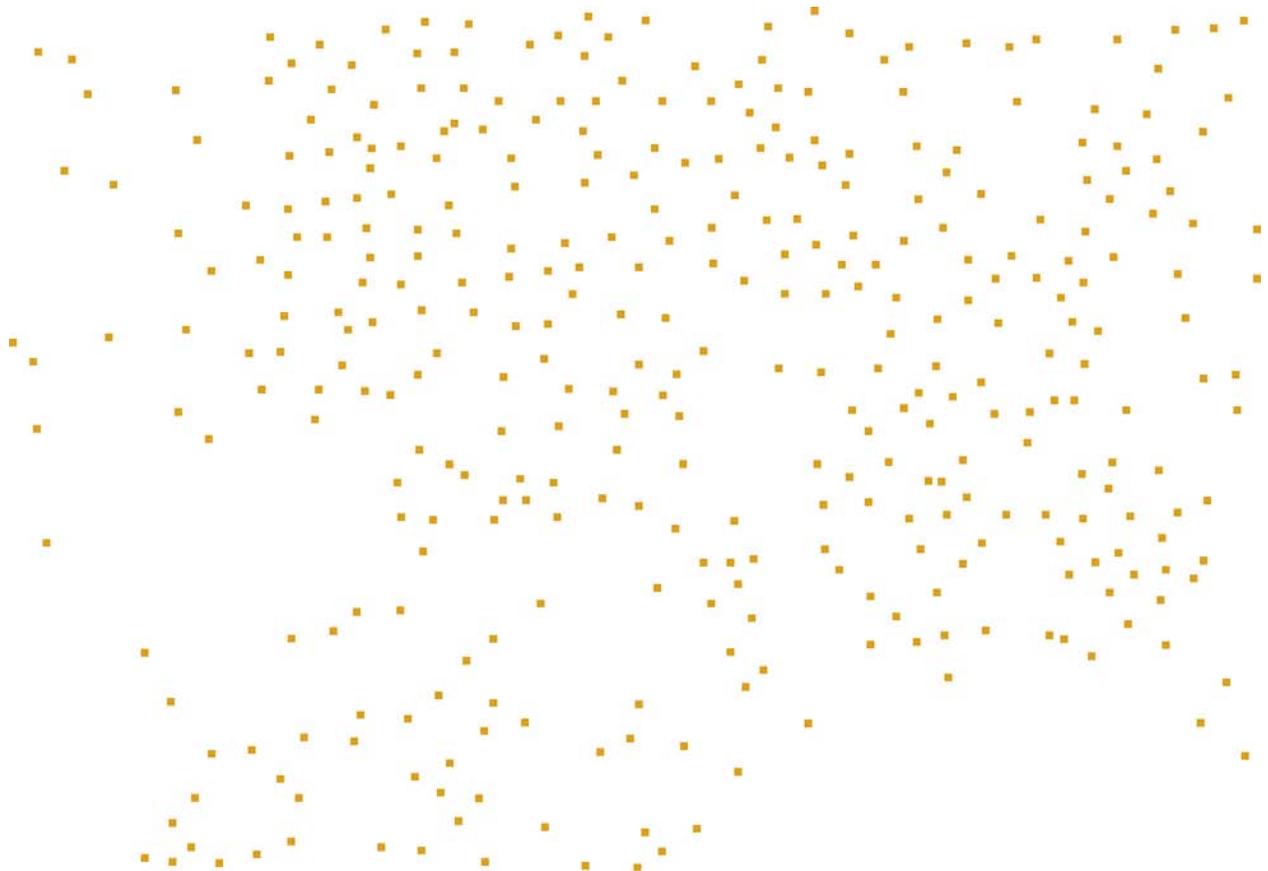
Vocabulary and Visual Provocation

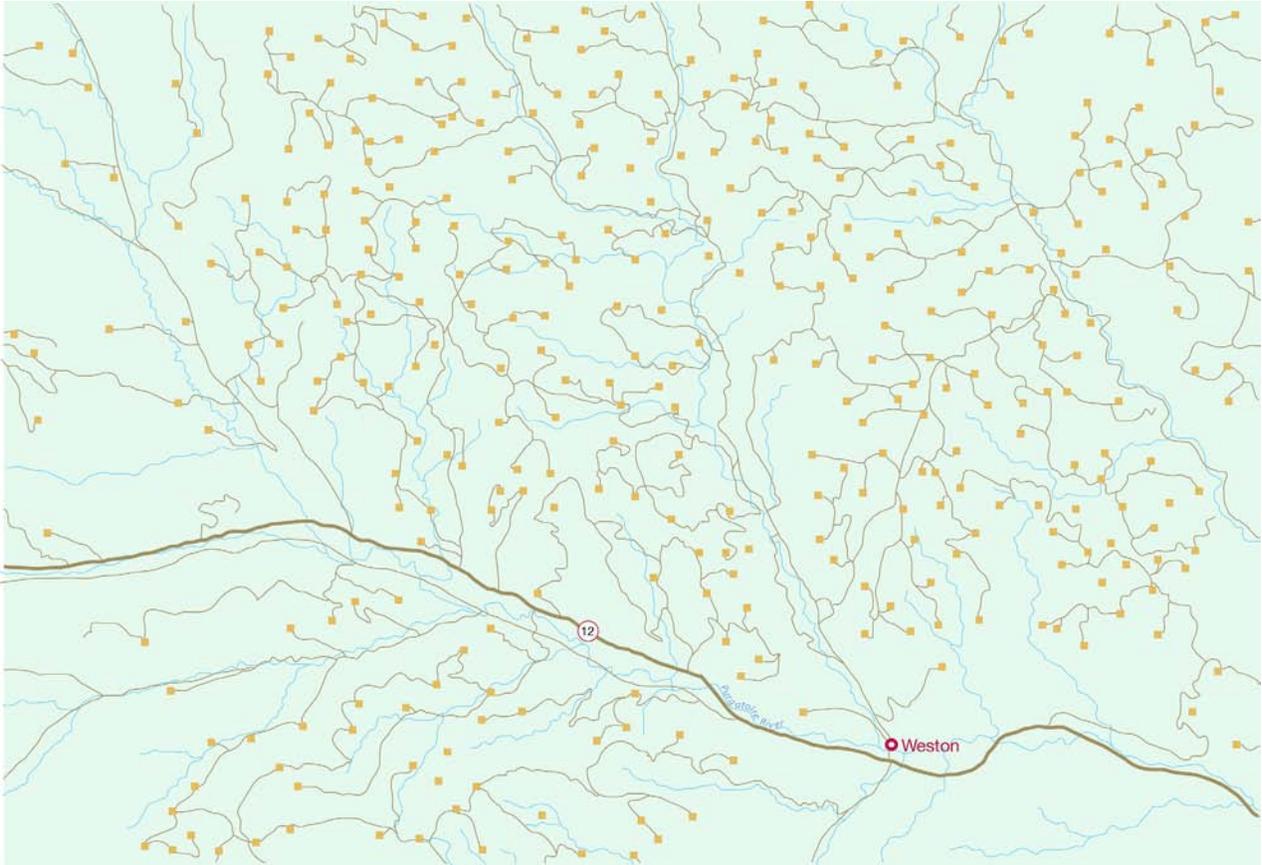
Designed environment

Systems

Interrelationship

Fracking Map





Materials

9X12 Clear plastic acetate sheets

Sharpie markers (all colors)

9X12 Tracing or vellum paper

Clipboards

Scissors or x-acto knives

Small self-adhering colored dots and squares (office supply variety)

Hole punch

Clear tape

Direct Instruction

1. Teacher will have prepared a simple map of area or environment students will be mapping. The map will be duplicated and copies placed onto clipboards, with a sheet of acetate taped over each map. There will also be a prepared list of items that students will be mapping. Examples: doors, windows, electrical outlets, fire extinguishers, water sources, lights, etc. Depending upon location, this list will change. As you generate a list, think about items that will challenge the students' preconceived notions about their environment, or select items that are rarely thought about.

2. Project introduction: In order to more closely examine the interplay of objects in our designed environment, we are going to create an overlay map, using layers of acetate to show the locations of the items on our list. On each layer will be a different "mapped" item. As you search for your item, think about anything new you may be discovering during your mapping quest.

3. Distribute the clipboards and different colored Sharpies for each layer. Next, send students out into the designated environment to map their items. The way students decide to mark items on the acetate is individually determined. It could be a simple mark or symbol. If desired, specific symbols can be assigned for each item beforehand to avoid confusion or to save time.

4. Allow students to map for 5-8 minutes.

5. After that time, students reconvene and teacher collects acetate. All layers of acetate will be layered together to create a combined map.

6. Teacher leads group through a discussion about what students noticed, how their lives might be without the items mapped, and how this activity could lead to other projects about the designed environment.

Clean Up

Teacher collects acetate sheets to layer together for final piece.

Students return clipboards, paper map, and sharpies.

Assessment

Embedded assessment of map making and final discussion looking/listening for the following criteria

- awareness of items in the environment
- connections and interrelations among items

Maine Learning Results

5A: Application of Design Content

B3: Meaning Making