

ALABAMA

Giant Traveling Map Lesson

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Alabama ACADEMIC STANDARDS / SUITABLE DISCIPLINES:

Third Grade – Geographic and Historical Studies:

4. Relate population dispersion to geographic, economic, and historic changes in Alabama and the world.
6. Identify conflicts within and between geographic areas involving use of land, economic competition for scarce resources, opposing political views, boundary disputes, and cultural differences.
7. Describe the relationship between locations of resources and patterns of population distribution.

Fourth Grade – Alabama Studies:

1. Compare historical and current economic, political, and geographic information about Alabama on thematic maps, including weather and climate, physical-relief, waterway, transportation, political, economic development, land-use, and population maps.
16. Determine the impact of population growth on cities, major road systems, demographics, natural resources, and the natural environment of Alabama during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Twelfth Grade – United States Government:

7. Describe the process of local, state, and national elections, including the organization, role, and constituency of political parties.

Environmental Science

17. Obtain, evaluate, and communicate geological and biological information to determine the types of organisms that live in major biomes. a. Analyze and interpret data collected through geographic research and field investigations (e.g., relief, topographic, and physiographic maps; rivers; forest types; watersheds) to describe the biodiversity by region for the state of Alabama (e.g., terrestrial, freshwater, marine, endangered, invasive).

OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- Learn about major cities in Alabama during three different historical periods
- Practice using grids and cardinal directions to locate cities in the state
- Practice using latitude and longitude lines (if appropriate for grade level)
- Analyze change over time
- Discuss topics such as the census (source of data), distribution of resources in the state, physical features associated with settlements, and implications of changes in population for political representation at various levels of government

RECOMMENDED GRADES: Fourth through adult

TIME NEEDED: 20 to 25 minutes, depending on whether discussion is held as part of the map visit or at a later time

MATERIALS:

- Compass rose
- 15 flat markers
- 15 tall cones
- 15 shorter, flexible cones
- 3 to 4 plastic chains for dividing the state
- List of Alabama cities by population for 1860/1940/2010

PREPARATION:

- Discuss reasons why people choose to live in different places
- Review historical settlement patterns in Alabama
- Review Alabama era info and U.S. Census data
- Develop predictions by participants about where they think people might live
- Consider push and pull factors in migration

RULES:

- Shoes are not allowed on the map. Please have participants remove shoes before walking on the map.
- No writing utensils on the map.
- No sliding on the map.

DIRECTIONS:

Using the list of cities and colored cones, participants will locate the fifteen most populous cities in Alabama for the years 1860, 1940, and 2010. They will then look for trends based on the east/west axis and north/south axis, waterways adjacent to and within Alabama, and defensive settlements from the 18th century. Encourage speculation about the factors that contributed to population development among the various regions of the state.

On the map:

1. Provide participants with an overview about exploring the top fifteen populated places in Alabama in 1860, 1940, and 2010 using U.S. Census data as a source of information.
2. Ask participants about the kinds of jobs they imagine people were doing in Alabama in 1860. Ask them to predict where people might be living. (If needed, ask the participants to consider where they live and why? What does a location need for people to live there?)
3. Take 15 of the round markers. Pass them out to 15 of the participants (usually just ask them to take one and pass the remainder along).
4. Read the 15 largest cities one at a time, going down the row of participants and asking the participants to place the marker on the dot identifying the town (star in the case of Montgomery).
5. Remind the participants that they can provide assistance to their classmates or colleagues about the location of a city based on cardinal directions or the grid. They should avoid shouting “over there”, “this way”, “left/right”, etc. From the beginning of the lesson, model the use of cardinal directions or the grid. Students may use the compass. Place NSEW labels on the walls or around the map.
6. After the flat, round markers are all on the map, ask the participants to interpret the new information that has been added to the map. Remind them that this is similar to adding a layer to a geographic information systems map.
7. Move on to the 1940 census and ask participants what jobs people were doing then. Ask them to predict where people might be living.
8. Pass out the 15 larger cones. Assign individual participants to place their cones on the 15 cities. For cities in the top 15 list by population in both 1860 and 1940, have participants pick up the flat marker and place it on top of the cone.
9. After the larger cones are all on the map, repeat Item 6 above, asking participants to think about what has changed and why.
10. Repeat process with 2010 census data and smaller or flexible orange cones. Have participants put the orange cone on top of the flat, round marker creating a pyramid, or on top of the large cone if the city was previously in the top 15 only in 1940.
11. Discuss where most of the people live and why. What areas of the state have no large settlements? Why? This is also an opportunity to review the concentration of people in the state in terms of electoral districts.

NOTES:

Review the Major Eras in Alabama History for contextual information for the time periods highlighted in this lesson.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

Q. What factors influence where people settle(d)?

A. Water, safety, transportation routes, physical geography

Q. Were the fifteen largest cities are located along a river or lake?

A. Yes, many of them were sited on a river.

Q. How many of the cities were in the various regions? Are they spread evenly or grouped together?

A. Several cities are part of the road that goes from east to west in the bottom third of the state. Other cities are grouped across the state.

Q. For what reasons did this pattern exist?

A. Transportation opportunities, employment opportunities

Q. How did Alabama compare with the rest of the United States?

A. In 1860, the population of all of Alabama was 3 percent of the population of the United States. In 1940 it was 2 percent.

	1860	1940	2010
Alabama	964,201	2,832,961	4,779,736
United States	31,183,582	132,164,569	308,745,538

Q. How many cities in the new top fifteen in 1940 were also in the top fifteen in 1860? What percentage is that?

A. 7, 47%

Q. How many cities in the new top fifteen in 2010 were also in the top fifteen in 1860? In 1940?

A. 1860: 7 of 15; 1940: 8 of 15

Q. Where are most of the large cities in Alabama located in 2010? Why?

A. Birmingham, because of major employment opportunities.

Q. Are major cities and suburbs significantly more concentrated than they were in 1940?

A. Depending on which suburbs are counted as being part of major cities, the concentration of population in major cities is similar to what it was in 1940.

Q. Generally speaking, how would you describe the majority of population movement and growth in the Alabama over the past one hundred years?

A. To cities from small towns and rural areas.

Q. Why? What factors have encouraged people to move and live in cities?

A. Jobs.

MODIFICATIONS:

For younger participants, focus on the map key and compass rose. For older participants, invite them to have more autonomy in the lesson and incorporate additional mathematical concepts.

EXTENSIONS:

Consider using the census data in math lessons. How much larger is Birmingham today than in 1860? How much larger is Birmingham than the 15th largest city? How concentrated is the population in Birmingham over time? How did the population of your city change?

Review the Census reports from 1860. Discuss the categories of people counted. How does that differ from how people are counted today?

For use with the GeoCivics activities (<https://www.uccs.edu/geocivics/>), invite participants to think about the current configuration of United States Congressional Districts in the state. Ask them to remember the key characteristics of how districts are drawn (equal population and contiguous). Invite them to pretend that their state has just two Congressional Districts; ask two people to pick up one of the chains and divide the state generally in half by population; invite two more people to divide the state into four districts (they may choose to move the original chain, or not). Discuss why some districts would likely be smaller in area than others. If appropriate, determine how to divide the state into state senate districts.

Consider when a giant floor map is a good tool for understanding geographic phenomena and when other tools (paper maps, online maps) might be more appropriate.

NOTE:

Thanks to National Geographic's Giant Traveling Maps team for the inspiration for this lesson, which is based on "People on the Move", a lesson for the North America Giant Map.

Thanks to the students at Guntersville Middle School for helping research this lesson.

RESOURCES:

Alabama Department of Archives and History
<https://archives.alabama.gov/aho.html>

	City	1860	√		City	1940	√		City	2010	√
	State	964,201			State	2,832,961			State	4,779,736	
1	Mobile	29,258		1	Birmingham	267,583		1	Birmingham	212,237	
2	Montgomery	8,843		2	Mobile	78,720		2	Montgomery	205,764	
3	Tuscaloosa	3,989		3	Montgomery	78,084		3	Mobile	195,111	
4	Huntsville	3,634		4	Gadsden	36,975		4	Huntsville	180,105	
5	Selma	3,177		5	Tuscaloosa	27,493		5	Tuscaloosa	90,468	
6	Kingston	1,960		6	Anniston	25,523		6	Hoover	81,619	
7	Cahawba	1,920	Former capital	7	Bessemer	22,826		7	Dothan	65,498	
8	Tuskegee	1,563		8	Selma	19,834		8	Decatur	55,683	
9	Marion	1,408		9	Dothan	17,194		9	Auburn	53,380	
10	Florence	1,395		10	Decatur	16,604		10	Madison	42,938	
11	LaFayette	1,113		11	Phenix City	15,351		11	Florence	39,319	
12	Jacksonville	703		12	Florence	15,043		12	Gadsden	36,856	
13	Decatur (app.)	650		13	Huntsville	13,050		13	Vestavia Hills	34,033	
14	Demopolis	473		14	Fairfield	11,703		14	Prattville	33,960	
15	Bellefonte	181	Ghost town near Hollywood	15	Talledaga	9,298		15	Phenix City	32,822	

	City	2020*	v
	Alabama	5,024,279	
1	Huntsville	215,006	
2	Birmingham	200,733	
3	Montgomery	200,603	
4	Mobile	187,041	
5	Tuscaloosa	99,600	
6	Hoover	92,606	
7	Auburn	76,143	
8	Dothan	71,072	
9	Decatur	57,938	
10	Madison	56,933	
11	Florence	40,184	
12	Vestavia Hills	39,102	
13	Phenix City	38,816	
14	Prattville	37,781	
15	Gadsden	33,945	

*2020 Census data is from Redistricting Data Hub using the State and Place level PL 94-171 datasets.

<https://redistrictingdatahub.org/data/download-data/#state-menu>