

# NEBRASKA

## Giant Traveling Map Lesson

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**Nebraska ACADEMIC STANDARDS / SUITABLE DISCIPLINES:**

SS K.3.1.c Identify geographic tools as representations of local and distant places, for example: maps, globes, photographs, GPS

SS K.3.4 Recognize that people belong to different groups and live in different settings

SS 1.3.2.c Explain how places change over time. For example: new building, a bigger road

SS 2.3.1 Explore where (spatial) and why people, places and environments are organized in the world

SS 2.3.2.c Explain how places and regions change over time

SS 3.3.4.b Describe examples of how and why cultures change in a community.

SS 4.3.1.c Analyze why things are located where they are in Nebraska

SS 4.3.4.b Compare and contrast population characteristics of the state of Nebraska.

SS 4.3.5.a Identify and evaluate how changes in human and physical geography have shaped Nebraska.

SS 5.1.1.d Evaluate how the decisions of the national government affect local and state government and citizens of diverse backgrounds.

SS 8.3.2 Examine how regions form and change over time.

SS HS.1.1.b Analyze the structure of American constitutional government

SS HS.1.1.e Analyze the foundation, structures, and functions of state government. For example: bicameral/unicameral, reapportionment/redistricting, branches of government

SS HS.3.1.b Compare the human and physical characteristics of a place and analyze spatial relationships with other locations.

SS HS.3.2.a Analyze physical and human processes that shape places and regions.

SS HS.3.4.a Compare trends in human migration, urbanization, and demographic composition at a local, national, and global scale over time and short-term and long-term causes and effects.

SS HS.3.5.c Evaluate geographical information sources for applications, credibility, and appropriateness in displaying spatial data.

**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will:

- Learn about major cities in Nebraska 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 Nebraska cities by population for 1890/1930/2010

**PREPARATION:**

- Discuss reasons why people choose to live in different places
- Review historical settlement patterns in Nebraska
- Review Nebraska era info
- 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.
- Participants should wear socks 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 Nebraska for the years 1890, 1930, and 2010. They will then look for trends based on the east/west axis and north/south axis, waterways adjacent to and within Nebraska, and defensive settlements from the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 Nebraska in 1890, 1930, 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 Nebraska in 1890. 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 Lincoln).
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 1930 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 1890 and 1930, 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 1930.
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 Nebraska 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. How many of the fifteen largest cities are located along a river or lake in 1890? 1930? 2010?**

A.

1890	1930	2010
8	10	9

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

A.

1890	1930	2010
East: 10 South: 3 Southwest: 2	East: 8 South: 4 West: 3	East: 9 South: 4 West: 2

**Q. For what reasons did this pattern exist?**

A. Transportation routes and employment opportunities played a role.

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

A. Consider how much the population of Nebraska increased compared to the increase in the United States over these time periods. What percentage of the United States population lives in Nebraska? Nebraska was once a more politically important state as a percentage of U.S. national population. A hundred years ago, Nebraska was worth 8 votes in the Electoral College and only 4 states completely west of the Missouri River had more congressional seats than Nebraska. Though the population continued to increase since that election, Nebraska did not grow at a rate comparable to many other states and, as a consequence, dropped from six members in the U.S. House of Representatives to today's three.

	1890	1930	2010
Nebraska	1,062,656	1,377,963	1,826,341
United States	62,979,766	123,202,624	308,745,538

**Q. How many cities in the new top fifteen in 1930 were also in the top fifteen in 1890? What percentage is that?**

A. 11, 73%

**Q. How many cities in the new top fifteen in 2010 were also in the top fifteen in 1890? In 1930?**

A. 1890: 10 of 15, 66%; 1930: 12 of 15, 80%

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

A. Along highways and water sources due to the job opportunities offered.

**Q. Are major cities and suburbs significantly more concentrated than they were in 1930?**

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 1930.

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

A. Population growth in the state exploded after statehood in 1867 but eventually plateaued during the 1890s due to drought, increased farm mechanization (forcing out small farmers), and a nationwide financial panic that hit agriculture especially hard. Continuing into the 20th Century, population in Nebraska grew during every decade except the 1930s, though at very modest rates, and more in line with the U.S. national average in recent years.

**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 Omaha today than in 1890? How much larger is Omaha than the 15th largest city? How concentrated is the population in Omaha over time? How did the population of your city change?

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.

**RESOURCES:**

Nebraska Department of Education

[https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Nebraska-Social-Studies-Standards\\_DRAFT-April-2019.pdf](https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Nebraska-Social-Studies-Standards_DRAFT-April-2019.pdf)

History Nebraska, <https://history.nebraska.gov/>

Geographic Educators of Nebraska, <https://www.geonebraska.org/index.html>

	City	1890	v		City	1930	v		City	2010	v
	State	1,062,656			State	1,377,963			State	1,826,341	
1	Omaha	140,452		1	Omaha	214,006		1	Omaha	463,081	
2	Lincoln	55,154		2	Lincoln	75,938		2	Lincoln	277,315	
3	Beatrice	13,936		3	Grand Island	18,041		3	Bellevue	53,040	
4	Hastings	13,584		4	Hastings	15,490		4	Grand Island	51,042	
5	Nebraska City	11,941		5	North Platte	12,061		5	Kearney	33,082	
6	Kearney	8,074		6	Fremont	11,407		6	Fremont	26,356	
7	Grand Island	7,586		7	Norfolk	10,717		7	Hastings	24,948	
8	Fremont	6,747		8	Beatrice	10,297		8	Norfolk	24,352	
9	Columbus City	3,134		9	Scottsbluffs	8,465		9	North Platte	24,135	
10	North Platte	3,055		10	Kearney	8,375		10	Columbus	22,834	
11	Norfolk	3,038		11	Nebraska City	7,230		11	Papillion	19,478	
12	McCook City	2,846		12	Columbus City	6,803		12	La Vista	17,062	
13	Crete	2,810		13	Alliance	6,669		13	Scottsbluff	14,887	
14	Fairbury	2,630		14	Chadron City	4,606		14	South Sioux City	13,145	
15	Blair	2,069		15	South Sioux City	3,927		15	Beatrice	12,309	

	City	2020*	√
	State	1,961,504	
1	Omaha	486,051	
2	Lincoln	291,082	
3	Bellevue	64,176	
4	Grand Island	53,131	
5	Kearney	33,790	
6	Fremont	27,141	
7	Hastings	25,152	
8	Norfolk	24,955	
9	Papillion	24,159	
10	Columbus	24,028	
11	North Platte	23,390	
12	La Vista	16,746	
13	Scottsbluff	14,436	
14	South Sioux City	14,043	
15	Beatrice	12,261	

\*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>