

LESSON OVERVIEW

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Context & Purpose:

I used this QFT lesson to open a cartography unit. This lesson and the next steps guided by students' questions in particular focus on a disciplinary skill ("Generate compelling questions to explore the history of Nevada") and a content standard ("Create maps that include human and physical features and that demonstrate spatial patterns in Nevada").

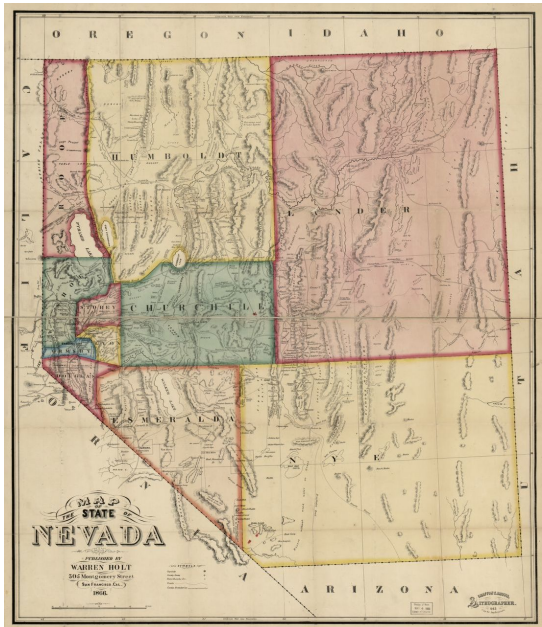
Lesson Procedure:

- The QFT lesson was completed in one day, ~60 minutes. Students completed all the steps of the QFT (review and discussion of rules, generating questions, categorizing and improving questions, and prioritizing questions).
 - Students reviewed the 4 rules of the QFT and discussed which one they anticipated will be the most difficult for them to follow. They also discussed strategies for making sure they follow the rules.
 - Students worked in groups of 4 on collaborative Jamboards ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) to ask their questions. The QFocus was shared with students through a [Prezi](#) in order to focus student attention on several smaller parts of the full image (the map title and publisher, the legend, and the county where we live) in addition to the full map.
 - Students worked together to categorize their questions as open or closed, marking each sticky note on their group Jamboard with an o or c. Groups were then prompted to group their questions thematically. Categories students came up with included "places," "color/shape," "maps," and "places you DON'T see."
 - For prioritization, students were told "You will be making your own map of Nevada! Choose the three questions that will best help you do research to create your own map of our state." They recorded their priority questions and justifications on a collaborative [Google Slide](#) (the white slide after their names).
- Next steps, guided by students' questions, took 2 weeks to complete. An informational/explanatory writing project following the unit is expected to take 2 more weeks to complete.

Next Steps (i.e. how student questions will be used after the QFT):

- Students were given 10 minutes to make a quick sketch of Nevada, including all the things they thought should be on a map of our state.
- The class unpacked the content standard ("Create maps that include human and physical features and that demonstrate spatial patterns in Nevada") together. Students asked questions again about the language of the standard, pulling out the vocabulary words. We approached unpacking the standard into three levels of learning targets by thinking of the task, purpose, and audience of a map, considering the same things as we do in writing. This allowed students to name the work that would show mastery of the standard (level 3), developing (level 2), and emerging (level 1).
- Based on their questions and the pre-assessment, I created a learning plan (<https://bit.ly/30Rzq1X>) with activities for them to learn about map features and to access resources to help them answer their priority questions about those map features and their Nevada-specific questions. Students selected the activities they needed to learn more about maps and Nevada's geography, then create a second draft of their map and gave feedback to each other based on the learning targets at the top of the learning plan. Students were told to answer that they needed to find the answers to their priority questions by the end of the unit, and record their answers on the [Google Slide](#) (the green slide after their names). If a student was unable to find the answer to their question, they were prompted to respond with an idea of how they would find that information.
- After the conclusion of the cartography unit, students are working on an informative/explanatory writing project. The prompt is: "The historians at the Library of Congress and the National Museum of American History are planning a new interactive exhibit for students of all ages on how to create a map. They are asking for experienced mapmakers to submit explanatory articles about how to create a map for visitors to this exhibit." The class worked together to generate a list of mapmaking ideas they thought were important for people to learn about, then narrowed the list down to the big three categories of research, human and physical features, and map features. Students are currently working through informative/explanatory writing mini lessons to help them develop their writing.

Question Focus: Note: The QFocus was presented to students via [Prezi](#).



LINK: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014589396/>

Reflect on your QFocus: You might consider why you chose this image, alternative QFocus options, earlier QFocus drafts or process you went through to develop it, etc.

This QFocus is one of the few times I didn't go through at least a few images before settling on a final selection. I like this image for several reasons:

- It's a treasure trove of smaller details when students zoom in to the full image. The high resolution made it an image well-suited to zoom ins so that students could examine those details. I used Prezi to create an "interactive" QFocus prompt for students, with different zoom-ins for them to focus on in addition to the full image. I selected the section of the image where the map title and publisher are located, the legend, and Douglas County, where we are located, to help students orient themselves in the full image of the map. They could manipulate the Prezi between the full image and the zoom-ins as needed.
- It includes a legend, which is something I wanted students to end up including in their own maps, but I didn't want to explicitly state it as a requirement. So many students asked questions about it that it brought up during the discussion of different levels of mastery for the mapmaking project.
- What was particularly interesting about this map was that it was created before the southern tip of modern-day Nevada, north of the Colorado River where Las Vegas is located, was transferred to Nevada. This section of the state used to be part of the Arizona Territory.

Tailoring Instructions:

- **Categorization Instructions:**

- Students worked together to categorize their questions as open or closed, marking each sticky note on their group Jamboard with an o or c. Groups were then prompted to group their questions thematically. Categories students came up with included "places," "color/shape," "maps," and "places you DON'T see."

- **Prioritization Instructions:**

- For prioritization, students were told "You will be making your own map of Nevada! Choose the three questions that will best help you do research to create your own map of our state." They recorded their priority questions and justifications on a collaborative [Google Slide](#) (the white slide).

- **Reflection Questions:**

- What do you like about the QFT?
- How do you feel about asking questions at school now versus how you felt at the beginning of the year?

LESSON OUTCOMES

Student Questions:

- Click on the Jamboard links ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) to view all of the class's questions. Here is a selection:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it that shape? Is it showing what it was like a long time ago? Why is there a symbols page? What is Lander? (Lyon, Nye, Esmeralda?) Why is our classroom the shape of Nevada? Where are the oceans? How did Nevada come to be? Why does it say 1866? What is the map for? Are the two squares next to it Colorado and Wyoming? Where is Carson [City] on this map? Why are there lots of colors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the symbols? Why is there no water on the outside of Nevada? Why does it say Warren Holt? Is there a timeline? Why are there so many countries in Nevada? Why does it not have all the states? Why does it look like it was from a long time ago? Is 1866 when the map was made? 1866? Is that when Nevada was a state? Why does it look stumped? What is the scale on the bottom for? Is it for measuring Nevada? Why is Douglas [County] so big? |
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Student Reflections:

- "What I like about the QFT is that I can ask questions. How I feel about asking questions now v. how I felt at the beginning of the year is probably that I can actually ask questions."
- "What I like about the QFT is that I got better at asking questions. I think I got better at asking questions then all of the years [before now]."
- "What I liked about the QFT is that it was fun. I feel really better at them [questions] than I did before."
- "I like this QFT because it is really fun and there are a lot of questions. I feel more comfortable asking questions now!"

TEACHER REFLECTIONS

Reflect on your lesson design and how well it achieved your objectives.

I'm so pleased with the outcome of the QFT! Using a primary source as the QFocus invites students to interact with history directly. It bridges the present with the past, and can give students a new perspective through which they can examine a topic. Students asked questions about the "stumped" appearance of the state and the 1866 publication date, which weren't selected as priority questions, but I'm glad students asked about them nonetheless.

Which student questions stood out to you? Why?

Students asked such a breadth of questions that clued me into their background knowledge of maps and our state in particular. A good portion of students asked questions like, "Where is Paris/London/etc.?" "Where are the oceans?" "Why does it not have all the states?" "Why are there so many countries in Nevada?" I realized that students were coming into this unit with less background knowledge than I was anticipating, which helped me develop the learning plan for the unit so that it included activities I wouldn't have included had I not read these questions. One student asked, "Why is Nevada stumped?" This is something that I doubt my students would have wondered about if they hadn't seen it in the primary source! A few other students asked about the 1866 publication date. Had I had a different goal for the unit, I could have changed the prioritization directions so students could research changes in Nevada's territory over time. I did not think about the lakes on the map until I read "Are the white spots lakes?" Looking back to the QFocus, all of the bodies of water are white, and rivers were depicted as black lines. Usually bodies of water are blue on a map that elementary students would create or use. An interesting observation that I still think about!

Overall, what did you learn from this experience? What questions do you now have?

I was really pleased with students' reflections on the process! This year's class expressed a lot of uncertainty and reluctance with asking questions at the beginning of the year. It has been my mission this year to help them realize the power of their questions and to perceive themselves as good question-askers. What's particularly exciting about this QFT was the way the questions were used by students throughout the unit of study to help guide their own learning. I'm very comfortable with the QFT, so pushing myself to use student questions in new ways and seeing the success of this unit gives me the confidence to continue experimenting with what "next steps" can look like.