

Montana Map Lesson Plans

Featuring

- Base Map of Montana, 11” x 17”
- 1857 Isaac Stevens “Map of the Indian Nations and Tribes”, Montana section, 11” x 17”
- Map Analysis Form and Map Lesson Plans

Geographic orientation

This exercise is designed to provide a familiarity with the basic geography of Montana, in order to better understand the contribution historical maps can make in the classroom as primary resource documents.

Supplies: Montana Base Map (McBain 1941), blue highlighter

Geography of Montana – Orientation

River systems: patterns on the landscape

Become familiar with the major rivers in Montana. Beginning with the USGS map of Montana, use a blue marker to highlight the course of the Missouri River and its three forks; also the Musselshell, the Milk, and the Marias rivers. Now trace the Yellowstone... and the Clark Fork River. Notice the pattern of the river systems in Montana.

Major and ‘island’ mountain ranges

Observe the major mountain ranges in Montana, the continental divide, and the outlier or island ranges.

Extended activity: make a list of the major ranges and rivers in Montana.

Optional: Bigger Picture

In what direction do each of these rivers flow? Are they tributary to larger rivers? What body of water do these rivers end up spilling into eventually? Investigate the following vocabulary terms and how they apply to Montana:

continental divide

headwaters

49th parallel

Historical Map Comparison

Supplies: 1857 Isaac Stevens “Map of the Indian Nations and Tribes of the Territory of Washington and the Territory of Nebraska west of the mouth of the Yellowstone”.
University of Washington Libraries, partial, showing Montana land base area .

Noticing the pattern of the river systems you traced on the base map of Montana, learn to recognize the pattern in order to orient yourself when observing an historic map.

Examine the 1857 Stevens map showing the “Indian Nations and Tribes” in the area which would become known as Montana (beginning with the establishment of Montana Territory in 1864).

Locate the rivers you identified on the base map. Note the location of the “Treaty of Oct 17 1855”, “Common Hunting Grounds”, forts and passes. Also locate boundaries drawn to show reservation lands on the west side. What else can you learn from this map?