

Unit 3, Lesson 7: The \$10 Million Map

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students explore the question - How did America get its name?

However, Don't reveal this question at the outset of the lesson as it is designed to unfold after students analyze a map.

Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 1a, 4-5** [Chronology]: Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- **History Standard 2a, 4-5** [Analysis]: Students will draw historical conclusions and construct historical accounts from primary and secondary source materials
- **History Standard 3a, 4-5** [Interpretation]: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

Common Core ELA Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.9** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Big Ideas

- cause-effect, change over time

Essential Questions

- How did America get its name?

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that America is named after an Italian explorer named Amerigo Vespucci after a German mapmaker inserted a feminized version of his name on a map that argued the existence of a “new world.”

Resources

- [Resource 1: The \\$10 Million Map \(1507\)](#)
- [Resource 2: Section of 1507 Waldseemuller Map](#)
- [Resource 3: Is this map worth \\$10 million?](#)
- [Resource 4: Birth Certificate](#)
- [Resource 5: Checks for Understanding](#)
- [Resource 6a: What do all of these places have in common?](#)
- [Resource 6b: What do all of these places have in common?](#)

Procedures

Pre-Planning: If you have magnifying glasses, distribute them to students as they will be analyzing a map with very small details.

1. **Warm-Up:** Project and distribute copies of [Resource 1: The \\$10 Million Map \(1507\)](#).
 - a. Limit what you say about the map at this point to the following:
 - i. the map was drawn in 1507
 - ii. the map is one of the most famous maps ever made
 - iii. in 2003 the Library of Congress paid \$10 million for the map
 - b. **Turn and Discuss:** have students scan the map and speculate - why might the map be so significant, so valuable? After a few minutes of productive struggle have passed, ask volunteers to share their thoughts.
2. **Close Read:** Assuming the students may be experiencing some productive struggle and have not come up with the desired response, project and distribute copies of [Resource 2: Section of 1507 Waldseemuller Map](#) [Source: [here](#)]. The big clue to the importance of the map is on this section of the map. Challenge students to find it with the additional support.

For the Teacher [do not share this information with students yet]

The significance of this map derives from the fact that the name “America” is identified in the top portion of this segment of the German mapmaker Martin Waldseemuller’s 1507 map. This is the first time the name “America” is applied to the “new world” continent. And it stuck ever since.

From the same website: “America is named after Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian explorer who set forth the then revolutionary concept that the lands that Christopher Columbus sailed to in 1492 were part of a separate continent. A map created in 1507 by Martin Waldseemüller was the first to depict this new continent with the name “America,” a Latinized version of “Amerigo.”

3. **Reading:** Distribute copies of [Resource 3: Is this map worth \\$10 million?](#) Let the title serve as the purpose for reading.
 - a. After completing the reading, ask students... Do you think this map is worth \$10 million (probably much more now)?
 - b. The map has been called “America’s Birth Certificate” as it is the first time that the name of America appears (suggested in an article [here](#) entitled “The Map that Named America”)
4. **Create a Birth Certificate for America:** As Resource 3 points out, the Waldseemuller map of 1507 has been called America’s birth certificate (see [here](#)). But birth certificates don’t look like maps. The next activity offers students an opportunity to create a birth certificate for America that looks like a real one.
 - a. Show a copy of [Resource 4: Birth Certificate](#) and point out the information that is written on a birth certificate.

- b. Let students work with a partner or in small groups to discuss what information should go on America's birth certificate then create their own individually.
 - c. A hope is that there will be some disagreements e.g., what the birthdate is (1492, 1507 etc.), who the parents might be (Columbus, Waldseemuller, Vespucci, Ferdinand, and Isabella, a Native American etc.). This will help to stimulate a conversation around History Standard 3 - why might there be different accounts of the same event with answers being points of view, use of different evidence.
 - d. It is important for students to understand that the birth date activity is linked to the naming of the continent by Europeans - a name that is universally recognized in our lifetimes. This is not to suggest that the activity supports any effort to deny a name that may have pre-existed Martin Waldseemuller's work. The Library of Congress offers some thoughts on this here (excerpted below):
 - i. "Throughout the hemisphere, states and centers of high civilization had risen and fallen. The dynamic Mexica (Aztec) and Inca empires were still expanding at this time and internal migration and warfare were common. The peoples did not see themselves as part of an entity. Only later would this area be given a unifying name—America—and the people labeled "Indians" by Europe."
 - e. Other options to consider include having students design their own versions of a birth certificate for "America" or create birth certificates from different perspectives e.g., Native Americans, Spaniards, Italians, Vikings etc.
5. **Video:** Show PBS World Explorers video - Amerigo Vespucci [here](#) (4:24). This video reinforces and extends points made in the Resource 3 reading.

Checks for Understanding

Distribute copies of [Resource 5: Checks for Understanding](#) and have students complete the checks for understanding.

Place Quiz

Students frequently raise questions relating to the continent not being named something like Columbia after Columbus (not that it should be, but it is a frequent wonderment). Show students a copy of [Resource 6a: What do all of these places have in common?](#) (or pass out copies). Ask students to try to figure out what all of these places have in common? Give students time to discuss in groups or with a partner then field responses.

Show a copy of [Resource 6b: What do all of these places have in common?](#) as this shows places in the United States named after Columbus. So, while he did not have a continent named after him, which some people think is wrong, he has many places in America and Europe named for him. A question stirring controversy today is - should he have places or monuments named after him?