



SLAVERY, GEOGRAPHY, AND POLITICS - THE IMPACT OF A 19TH CENTURY POPULATION DENSITY MAP TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

High School History

Grade Level:

11-12

Approx. Time Required:

75 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze and interpret a historical map (showing the population density of enslaved people in the southern United States), an opinion piece, and a painting.
- Students will be able to explain how decision-makers, such as President Abraham Lincoln, likely used the map during the Civil War.

Activity Description

Students will analyze multiple resources to learn how President Abraham Lincoln and Union forces used a 19th century population density map of enslaved people in the southern United States to help Americans understand the social implications of slavery during the Civil War. This marked the first time in U.S. history that a statistical map was used for this purpose.

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Topics:

- Choropleth maps
- The Civil War
- Population density
- Slavery
- Statistical maps

Skills Taught:

- Drawing conclusions
 - Examining primary and secondary sources
 - Making an argument
 - Reading and interpreting maps
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Materials Required

- The student version of this activity, 3 pages
- A computer with Internet access for each student

Activity Items

This activity uses the following online resources:

- Mapping Slavery in the Nineteenth Century
www.census.gov/history/pdf/slavedensitymap.pdf?cssp=SERP
- "Visualizing Slavery," a 2010 opinion piece in *The New York Times*, by Susan Schulten
opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/09/visualizing-slavery/?_r=2

For more information to help you introduce your students to the U.S. Census Bureau, read "[Census Bureau 101 for Students](#)." This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information, read

["Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities."](#)

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard	Strand	Cluster
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.</p>	RH 11-12 - History/ Social Studies	Key Ideas and Details
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.</p>	RH 11-12 - History/ Social Studies	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

UCLA National Standards for History: U.S. History Content Standards

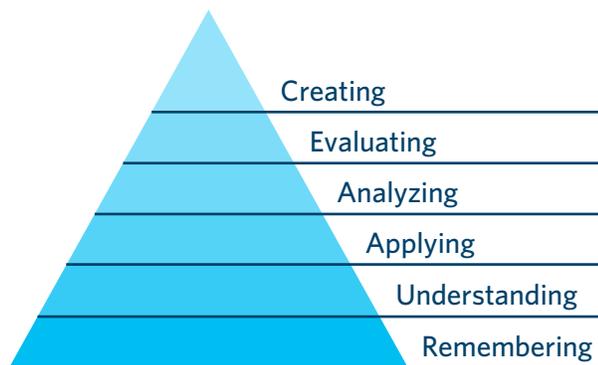
Era	Standard
5 - Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)	Standard 2: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people

UCLA National Standards for History: Historical Thinking Standards

Standard	Description
Standard 2: Historical Comprehension	<p>Draw upon data in historical maps. Students will examine a population density map of enslaved people in the southern United States during the 19th century, and other resources, to understand the impact of census population density data on U.S. policies, specifically during the Civil War.</p>
Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation	<p>Evaluate major debates among historians. Students will analyze census data to consider whether the cause of the Civil War was due to the effort to maintain states' rights or to preserve slave labor.</p>

Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will **evaluate** the impact of data on political and military strategies in the United States during the 19th century.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Cartography** – the process of making maps
- **Thematic map (aka statistical map)** – a type of map that displays a physical, social, political, cultural, or economic theme across geographic areas
- **Choropleth map** – a type of thematic map that uses different colors to show specific values or ranges of values, usually with darker colors representing greater values and lighter colors representing lesser values
- **Emancipation** – the process of freeing a person from another person’s control or power
- **Population density** – the number of people per unit of area
- **Secession** – the act of becoming independent by separating from a nation or state

Students should have a basic understanding of the following concepts:

- The Civil War and its causes
- The Emancipation Proclamation

Teachers should ask students to get them thinking, “Why did many southern states secede from the Union and form the Confederacy in February 1861?”

During the Activity

Teachers should monitor students as they work.

After the Activity

Teachers should lead a class discussion and/or assign an exit slip (a written student response to questions that teachers pose at the end of an activity) to give students a chance to share what they learned. Teachers could ask:

- What was the cause of the Civil War: states’ rights or the effort to preserve slave labor?

Extension Idea

Teachers could use other Statistics in Schools activities about similar topics to build on this activity.

Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

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opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/09/visualizing-slavery/?_r=2

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to analyze and interpret a historical map (showing the population density of enslaved people in the southern United States), an opinion piece, and a painting.
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1. Navigate to the URL for “Mapping Slavery in the Nineteenth Century,” and read the text below the map. Next, open an interactive version of this choropleth map by clicking the first link in the text. You can zoom in and out of the map using the slider at the bottom, or you can click and drag the map to move it around.

What is the purpose of the “Scale of Shade” in the lower right corner? Use examples to support your answer.

The “Scale of Shade” is a key that defines the data ranges for each category of population density on the map. Student examples may vary but could include that the lightest shading on the map corresponds with the lowest population density of enslaved people (less than 10 percent) and that the darkest shading on the map corresponds with the highest population density of enslaved people (greater than 80 percent).

2. What population density patterns do you see on the map, and how do those patterns correspond to or conflict with what you already know about slavery prior to and during the Civil War?

Student answers will vary but should include that there are high population densities of enslaved people along the Mississippi River, as well as along the East Coast and in much of South Carolina. These patterns correspond with the importance of water as a means to transport enslaved people and the material outputs of the institution of slavery from the South. Furthermore, the South was primarily agrarian, with little industrial base. White immigrants were primarily entering the United States through ports in the North, adding to the North’s ability to maintain cheap industrial labor — a workforce not available in the South.

3. The statistical map, which uses 1860 Census data, was the first of its kind to be produced in the United States — by the U.S. Coast Survey in September 1861, shortly after the Confederacy was formed and the secession crisis became the main focus of Abraham Lincoln’s presidency.

What evidence is there that the makers of this map were Union supporters? Why might they have produced this map so soon after the Confederacy was formed?

Student answers may vary but could include: Language at the top of the map states that it was “sold for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers of the U.S. Army,” which means that sales supported the Union. Also, the map shows the population density of enslaved people in only the southern states, so the Union could use it to make the argument that the Confederacy was rooted in slavery and should be disbanded. By using the map, the Union could also make the case for the emancipation of enslaved people, which would create an opportunity for the Union Army to enlist them. Emancipation would have been a major threat to the South’s economy at the time.

4. What did the map let readers visualize about the South that they may not have been able to previously?

Student answers may vary but could include: It allowed people to see that some areas of the South were densely populated with enslaved people and others were not.

5. Go to the URL at the top of this activity to read “Visualizing Slavery,” a 2010 opinion piece in *The New York Times* by Susan Schulten, a history professor at the University of Denver. Schulten wrote that the population density map you examined in this activity “uniquely captured the complexity of the institution” of slavery. Explain in your own words what she meant by that statement.

Student answers may vary but could include that the map used census data to make clear, in a visual way, how much the South relied on slave labor during the 19th century, while also showing how the concentrations of enslaved people in southern states varied through a new technique in cartography — shading.

6. Now examine the painting — “President Lincoln Reading the Emancipation Proclamation to His Cabinet,” by Francis Bicknell Carpenter — included in the piece online. By clicking to zoom in, you can see that Carpenter included the population density map in the lower right corner of the scene. What do you think attracted President Lincoln to this map? How did it reflect one of the central themes of his presidency?

Student answers will vary but could include: The states with the strongest secessionist sentiment and the areas with the largest concentrations of enslaved people were the focuses of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, and the map would have been able to provide him with that information. With the map, he could see a way to dismantle the Confederacy by dismantling slavery.

7. Many of the major battles of the Civil War took place in areas with high population densities of enslaved people. How might the population density map have been a resource for the Union forces during the Civil War?

Student answers may vary but could include: During the war, Union forces targeted major city centers and trading centers in the South — areas that also had high concentrations of enslaved people. Furthermore, the Union forces used this map as a propaganda tool to awaken northerners to the sheer number of enslaved people in the South; as an example, the map noted that Mississippi and South Carolina had more enslaved people than free people.

8. Schulten concluded her opinion piece with this statement: “But the 1861 map was in a class by itself: a landmark cartographic achievement, a popular propaganda tool, and an eminently practical instrument of military policy. No wonder Lincoln liked it.” Do you agree or disagree with the three points of her statement? Explain your point of view using specific details from the resources in this activity.

Student answers will vary depending on whether they agree or disagree with the three points of Schulten’s statement.