



# EXPLORING 19TH CENTURY POPULATION GROWTH THROUGH INTERACTIVE MAPS

## Activity Items

This activity uses the following online tools:

- Following the Frontier Line, 1790 to 1890  
[www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/001](http://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/001)
- Increasing Urbanization, Population Distribution by City Size, 1790 to 1890  
[www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/005](http://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/005)

## Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to understand and interpret two types of thematic maps.
- I will be able to determine the value of each type of map.
- I will be able to explain how geography affects population growth and migration patterns.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1 – Examine Population Density

Watch as your teacher explores **Following the Frontier Line, 1790 to 1890** on the screen. This map shows the population density in different areas of the United States after each decennial census through 1890.

1. Write three observations and three questions about what you notice when the slider at the bottom of the tool moves.
2. What kind of map is this, and how do you know?
3. What do the different colors on this map signify?
4. Watch as your teacher checks the “Selected Cities” box and returns to the 1790 data, then name a city that had at least 50 people per square mile that year.
5. Where was the U.S. population concentrated in 1790, and what might have been one reason for that concentration?

6. Now compare the 1870 map with the 1790 map, explaining two major changes in historical context.
7. Observe the data for “Selected Cities” in 1870. How does the shading vary around the cities, and what does that mean as far as population density?
8. Note the lightly shaded diagonal area on the 1870 map, generally between Pittsburgh and Atlanta. Which geographic feature could account for the lower population density in that area, and why? (It may help to refer to the U.S. map that your teacher provided.)

## Part 2 - Examine City Population Size

Watch as your teacher explores **Increasing Urbanization, Population Distribution by City Size, 1790 to 1890** on the screen. This map shows U.S. cities of two sizes, 5,000 to 99,999 people and 100,000 or more people, after each decennial census through 1890.

1. Write three observations and three questions about what you notice when the slider at the bottom of the tool moves.
2. What kind of map is this, and how do you know?



8. Between the map and the timeline is a graph labeled “Percentage of city dwellers living in cities of 100,000 people or more.” When your teacher clicks the “play” button, you will see that the line on this graph goes up. What was the percentage in 1790?
  
9. Now compare the 1870 map with the 1790 map, explaining two major changes in historical context.
  
10. Identify a few of the largest urban areas on the East Coast in 1870.
  
11. Look again at the “percentage of city dwellers” graph. What was the percentage in 1870?

## Part 3 - Analyze the Tools and Draw Conclusions

1. Determine the benefits and drawbacks of each of the data visualizations — **Following the Frontier Line and Increasing Urbanization** — for showing how the U.S. population grew from 1790 to 1890.
2. What are three factors that affected the growth and distribution of the U.S. population from 1790 to 1890?
3. By 1890, people living in cities of 100,000 or more people made up a significant proportion of all city dwellers. This reflected a shift from an agriculture-based society to an industry-based society, especially in the Northeast and around the Great Lakes.
  - a. Identify and explain the benefits that the United States experienced as a result of this growth.
  - b. Identify and explain the challenges that the United States experienced as a result of this growth.
4. Using what you learned from the two maps, explain how geographical features can affect population growth and migration patterns.