

Changing Times and Changing Boundaries: Maps of Early Tennessee

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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Grade Level: 8th grade

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Introduction: Historical maps are an excellent tool for teaching about the early history of Tennessee. In this lesson, students will analyze and compare two early Tennessee maps. The lesson is intended as an introduction to the study of expansion and statehood in Tennessee.

Guiding Questions:

- Why do people create maps?
- What kinds of information do maps convey?
- How did Tennessee change between 1795 and 1818?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will

- Analyze historical maps
- Draw inferences from historical maps about early Tennessee history

Curriculum Standards:

8.28 Identify how westward expansion led to the statehood of Tennessee and the importance of the first state constitution (1796). (G,H,P,T, TCA)

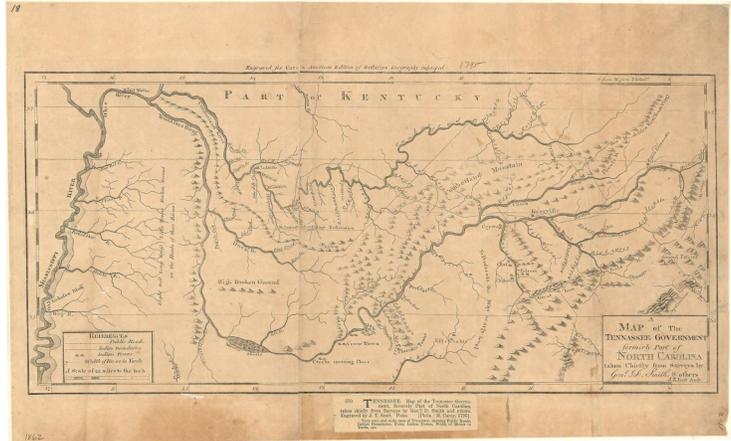
Leaders and events to consider:

- William Blount
- John Sevier
- Rocky Mount
- Treaty of Holston
- Cumberland Gap
- River systems
- Natchez Trace
- Jackson Purchase

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Materials Needed:

- 1) Classroom Treasure map (created by teacher)
- 2) [A Map of the Tennessee Government, formerly part of North Carolina](#)
- 3) [Map of Tennessee, 1818](#)
- 4) [Map of Kentucky and Tennessee](#)
- 5) [Tennessee County Selection Map](#)



Background for Teacher:

“Steps to Tennessee Statehood”
“William Blount, Rocky Mount & the Treaty of the Holston”
“Natchez Trace & the Jackson Purchase”

These above essays are available at [http://www.teachtnhistory.org/index.cfm/m/104/Content Essays](http://www.teachtnhistory.org/index.cfm/m/104/Content%20Essays)

“William Blount”

Author: Terry Weeks

Source Location: Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture

“Natchez Trace”

Author: John D.W. Guice

Source Location: Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture

“Jackson Purchase”

Author: Blythe Semmer

Source Location: Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture

*All articles can be used for follow-up student notes (Cornell, worksheets, guided notes, etc.) at teacher’s discretion.

Lesson Activities:

Lesson Activity 1- Introduction

Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 and give each group the treasure map created by the teacher. Some students will figure out the meaning of the map quickly, other groups may need some minimal instructions. Allow students to search until someone locates the “treasure.”

Debrief:

- 1) Ask the students how they were able to determine the purpose of the map and meaning of the symbols
- 2) Ask the students about the “treasure” object. Is it something that they consider a “treasure”? Why or why not?
- 3) Explain to students that by noting what is included, emphasized or excluded on a map they can draw inferences about what is important to the mapmaker.

Lesson Activities Continued:

Lesson Activity 2: [A Map of the Tennessee Government, formerly part of North Carolina](#)

Give each student a copy of "[A Map of the Tennessee Government, formerly part of North Carolina.](#)" Tell the students to spend 5 minutes silently studying the map and taking note of the details. Resist the urge to let students comment or ask questions before the time is up. If possible, project the map onto a whiteboard for reference during discussion. Once the viewing time is over, ask students to share their observations. Discuss their observations and ask follow-up questions as necessary to bring out the following points from the map:

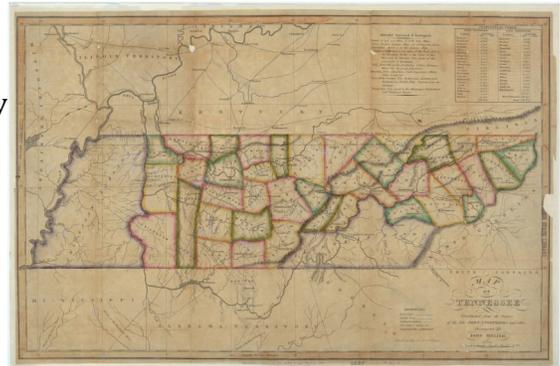
- Rivers were emphasized because they were used for transportation
- Geographic features that would impede travel such as mountains are prominent features
- Roads were not important based on their absence from the map
- Large parts of the state were still occupied by Native Americans
- Few settlements existed

Have the students summarize their discussion by completing the following sentence stem:

In 1795, Tennessee was _____, _____, and _____.

Lesson Activity 3: [Map of Tennessee, 1818](#)

Pass out the [Map of Tennessee, 1818](#). Ask students to carefully observe this map for 5 minutes and make note of similarities and differences to the previous map. Ask students to share their observations. Discuss their observations and ask follow-up questions as necessary to bring out the following points from the map:



Similarities:

-Areas of land still belong to Native Americans

Differences:

- Many more towns are shown on the map implying population growth
- Rivers and other geographic features are less emphasized implying the map is probably not intended for use by travelers
- Many counties exist and their boundaries are emphasized on the map implying the existence of a strong government and the importance of legally recognized land claims.

Have the students summarize their discussion by completing the following sentence stem:

The Map of Tennessee 1818 shows that _____, _____, and _____.

This map also features a few errors, including 1) Reelfoot Lake is located outside the state, 2) Several county names are misspelled, 3) Middle Tennessee seems to be shifted a little further west than it should be.

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Lesson Activities Continued:

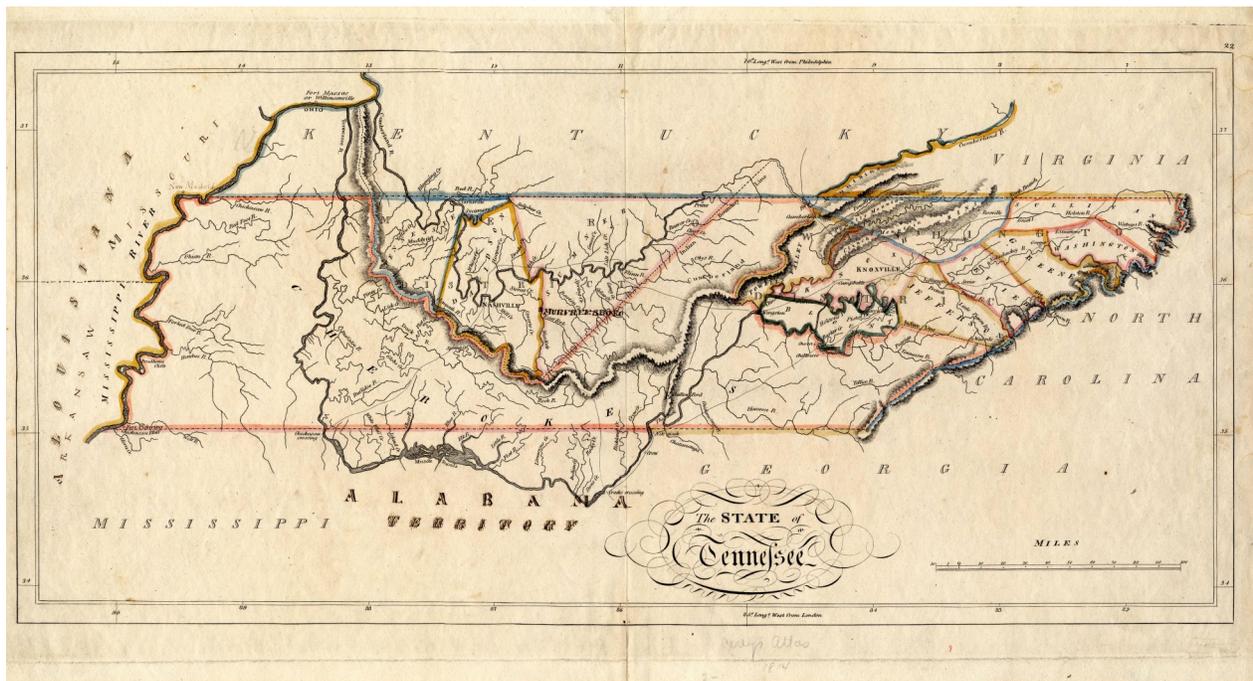
Assessment: Exit Card

Ask students to predict what a map of Tennessee in 1840 might look like based on the trends identified in the previous maps. Student descriptions should contain at least three specific examples of what would or would not be on the map.

Note: As you teach additional lessons on Tennessee's expansion, have students refer back to and discuss their predictions.

Extending the Lesson:

- 1) Have students draw their predicted 1840 Map of Tennessee and compare it to the [Map of Tennessee and Kentucky](#).
- 2) Have students compare the [Map of Tennessee 1818](#) with a map of modern counties such as the one found at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/TN/PST045218> and note the changes.
- 3) Have students find the mistakes in the [Map of Tennessee 1818](#). (Mistakes listed earlier in the lesson.)
- 3) Have students research the history of their home county to determine when and why it was formed and what group or entity previously claimed the land from which it was formed.



1796 Map of Tennessee, TSLA Map Collection.

All maps featured in lesson plan are in the collections of the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

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