Compare and Contrast Historical Maps of Europe

Students compare and contrast maps of European borders at three points in history: after World War I, after World War II, and the 2011 European Union countries. Students analyze borders that have changed and others that have remained the same.

GRADES

6 - 8

SUBJECTS

Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, World History

CONTENTS

1 Link, 6 PDFs

OVERVIEW

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For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/compare-and-contrast-historical-maps-of-europe/

DIRECTIONS

1. Identify physical and cultural features of Europe.

Project the provided MapMaker 1-Page Map of Europe on the board. As a whole class, review physical and cultural features of Europe from the past several lessons by asking students to come to the front of the room to draw features on the map. Ask: *Which of these features have changed over the past 100 years? How have they changed?* If students have difficulty,

explain to students that, although physical features don't change much over time, our relationship to those features does change. For example, rails replace rivers for transport, roads make mountains passable, some streams change course, and natural resources are used. Cultural groups constantly evolve and migrate, some groups are assimilated into others, and sometimes new groups emerge.

2. Build background on the European Union.

Explain to students that they will compare maps of European borders at three points in history. One of those points is the European Union as of 2011. Explain to students that the European Union, or EU, is an association of European countries formed in 1993 for the purpose of achieving political and economic integration. If possible, bring in euros, the official currency of the eurozone, as realia for students to see and touch.

3. Have students compare and contrast three maps of Europe from different times.

Distribute three maps to each student: Europe, 1920; Europe, 1960; and The European Union, 2011, or project the maps on the board. Ask students to work independently to highlight borders that have stayed fairly consistent over time. Using a different color, ask students to highlight the political borders that have changed significantly over time. If you have the map transparencies, overlay them to show how borders have changed. If students have difficulty identifying changes, prompt them with questions like the following:

- *Describe the borders of Germany and Poland in 1920. How are they different in 1960?*
- *How did Finland's borders move between 1920 and 1960?*
- *Look at the western border of Russia in 2011. How does it contrast with the border in 1920 and 1960?*

4. Have students compare and contrast historical maps of Europe and a physical map.

Distribute copies of the Physical Map of Europe, or have students access this map from their portfolios. Have students compare the borders that they identified as staying fairly consistent over time to the physical map. Ask: *What physical features correspond to the stable borders? Do the physical features explain the border stability? Why or why not?* Have students make

the same comparison for the borders that have changed significantly over time. Ask: *Can physical features explain why the borders might have shifted? How?* As you observe student work, use the following prompts to guide student thinking:

- *Why might a river in this area be a country border, but not here?*
- *How do you think a certain physical feature and cultural features have interacted; for example, a mountain range slowing the spread of a religion?*
- *Where do you think political borders led to cultural shifts? Where have cultural shifts defined political borders?*

Ask students to write notes about their ideas on their historical maps.

5. Have students compare and contrast historical maps of Europe and cultural maps.

Distribute copies of the maps Dominant Languages of Europe and Dominant Religions of Europe, or have students access these maps from their portfolios. Have students answer the same questions for cultural groupings. Ask: *Can these explain stable and/or shifting borders in Europe? How?* Ask students to write notes about their ideas on their historical maps.

Informal Assessment

Check for student understanding by viewing their notes as they compare and contrast the three maps with physical and cultural maps, and questioning their thinking.

Extending the Learning

- Have students conduct additional research, write a report, or create a presentation about what they see happening in Europe over time.
- Have students conduct more research on the European Union, and how and why countries join.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography
- Human Geography

Social Studies

- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify how political borders have changed over the past 100 years
- compare changes in political borders to physical and cultural features of Europe

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Applying
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Analyzing Geographic Information
  - Answering Geographic Questions

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- **Theme 2:**
Time, Continuity, and Change
- **Theme 3:**
People, Places, and Environments

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 1:**
How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information
- **Standard 17:**
How to apply geography to interpret the past
- **Standard 18:**
How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Multi-colored highlighters
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Before starting the activity, make transparencies of key maps. Print the following maps on transparency paper: Europe, 1920; Europe, 1960; and The European Union, 2011.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

In 1914, some of the most powerful countries of Europe formed rival alliances, with Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy in one alliance, and Russia, the U.K., and France in another. When Russia and Austria-Hungary intervened in fighting that broke out in the Balkans, the rest of Europe was plunged into World War I, which lasted from 1914-1918. In the years after World War I, revolution and civil war impacted Russia, Germany, and the remains of Austria-Hungary. Europe as a whole was greatly changed as a result. Russia and Germany became dramatically smaller, and the Russian revolution of 1917 led to the creation of the Soviet Union. In addition, many smaller states appeared.

World War II began in 1939, when Germany's invasion of Poland forced Britain and France to declare war on Germany. By 1942, most of Europe was under the control of Germany and its allies. But by 1945, the German army was weakened by a reviving Soviet Union, and the war ended in spring of 1945. Afterward, Germany was much smaller in size and divided into East and West. And the U.S.S.R. included Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine, and occupied northern East Prussia.

At the end of World War II, many European intellectuals, politicians, and populations as a whole were tired of conflict. They saw an opportunity to finally create a unified Europe that would not descend into violent conflict again. Thus, the idea of a pan-Europe, or United States of Europe, was born. The European Union, or EU, started out as merely a treaty among six nations to trade steel and coal for free with one another. Six countries—the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, and Italy—formed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC was such a wild success that these countries eventually signed

further treaties eliminating many of the tariffs on other products between them. As the economic union grew, other states decided they wanted to join. The ECSC became the European Economic Community, and began accepting new members. Eventually, states began to give up more of their political sovereignty to the community. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, it was decided that the geopolitical climate was ripe for countries to join a true European Union—a Union with some political capacity—and to unify currencies. This goal was established and signed into law in 1992 at the Treaty of Maastricht. The euro was unveiled to the public on January 1, 2002. States rid themselves of their former currencies and joined economic forces with the new one in the "Euro Zone."

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
border	noun	natural or artificial line separating two pieces of land.
country	noun	geographic territory with a distinct name, flag, population, boundaries, and government.
Europe	noun	sixth-largest continent and the western part of the Eurasian landmass, usually defined as stretching westward from the Ural mountains.
European Union	noun	association of European nations promoting free trade, ease of transportation, and cultural and political links.
map	noun	symbolic representation of selected characteristics of a place, usually drawn on a flat surface.
physical features	noun	naturally occurring geographic characteristics.
World War I	noun	(1914-1918) armed conflict between the Allies (led by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France) and the Central Powers (led by Germany and Austria-Hungary). Also called the Great War.

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
World War II	noun	(1939-1945) armed conflict between the Allies (represented by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union) and the Axis (represented by Germany, Italy, and Japan.)

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

- National Geographic Education: Europe—Physical Geography
- National Geographic Education: Europe—Human Geography

Maps

- NG MapMaker 1-Page Map: Europe
- National Geographic Education: Europe MapMaker Kit
- NG MapMaker Interactive: Europe

Websites

- National Geographic Education: National Teacher Leadership Academy (NTLA)

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