

Lesson Title: Map Skills—Using Primary Resources

Written by: Michelle Isenhoff

Length: 30 min.

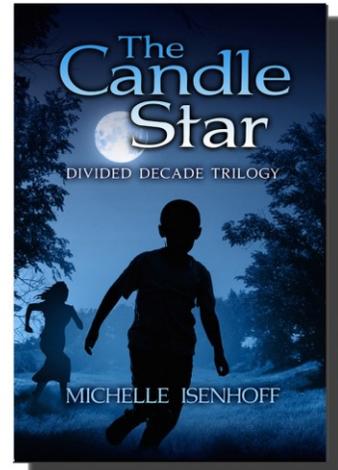
Grade Level: 5-8

Lesson Overview:

Students will practice mapping skills using a Civil War era primary resource in conjunction with the children's historical novel, *The Candle Star*.

Introduction:

In *The Candle Star*, Emily travels from Charleston, South Carolina to Detroit, Michigan. The year is 1858, just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. This whole group activity makes use of an original map from 1856 that has been digitized on the Library of Congress website. The map shows the railroads in operation, the railroads in progress, and the proposed lines at that time.



Objectives:

1. Students will study a map and plot a course based on what they learn. They will become familiar with states, cities, and landforms in eastern America.
2. Students will make use of a primary resource to learn about the Civil War era and compare and contrast their findings with today.
3. Students recognize primary resources as a record of human experience and identify their historical significance.

Preparation/Materials:

You will need the digital map Dinsmore's complete map of the railroads & canals in the United States & Canada (1856) and the means to project it to the classroom. It is available here: <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701p.rr000300/>. Familiarize yourself with using the digital map prior to the lesson. You may have to refresh the page at times. A classroom map showing the eastern half of the United States that is visible to the entire class would also be beneficial. Finally, print out a copy of the USA Road Map of today's major interstate highways, which is available here: <http://michelleisenhoff.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/usa-road-map.pdf>.

Activity:

1. With a map of the United States clearly visible, begin by asking students what they know about the geographical and political divide caused by the issue of slavery prior to the American Civil War based on their reading of *The Candle Star* and other prior knowledge. List their responses on the board. If they don't mention them, ask these specific questions:
 - Which region was pro-slavery?
 - Which region was anti-slavery?
 - Which states would form the Confederacy?
 - Which states would form the Union?

2. Project Dinsmore's 1856 railroad map. Zoom in to the Gulf of Mexico and examine the map key.

3. Pan out so the whole map is visible and ask the following questions:

- Does the North or the South have a denser network of railroad lines? Would you expect this? Why or why not? How do you suppose that affected the outcome of the Civil War?
- Where did the major hubs form? Why do you suppose they formed at these particular locations?

4. Zoom in on the appropriate locations to answer the following questions:

- Compare the hub at Boston to the one in Chicago. Which one has more completed lines? Which one has more lines in progress? What reasons can you conclude for this? Now find Iowa City, Iowa and note the number of lines in progress. Does this support the conclusion you just reached?
- Compare the number of railroad lines in Ohio to the number in Michigan. What factors might account for this inequality?
- Find Richmond, Virginia. Now find Frankfort, Kentucky. What do you notice about the number of railroad lines in the space between them? Why do you suppose this region has so few lines?
- Show students a map of today's interstate highway system. Compare and contrast it to the 1856 railroad map.

Culminating Activity:

- As a class, plot a course Emily could have taken from Charleston to Detroit, being careful to use only completed rail lines. What cities would she pass through? What direction did she travel initially? Why do you suppose there is not a more direct route?
- There are 682 miles from Charleston, South Carolina to Detroit, Michigan in a straight line. Make an estimate as to the number of miles a rail passenger might have to travel to cover that distance.