

MAP SKILLS HANDBOOK

An earlier section of this textbook noted the importance of maps in expanding and reinforcing your understanding of U.S. history. These images also play an important role in the AP* curriculum, because they often appear as sources on the annual exam, both in the multiple-choice section and for the DBQ essay.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL VALUE OF MAPS

Your textbook contains many useful maps that can help you develop your AP* skills. Along with the written text and other visuals, maps can address various issues and questions presented in your textbook. Maps are part of the historical record that you can use in conjunction with other sources to answer historical problems and prepare for the AP* exam.

In every case, however, you should not consider maps in isolation. Study them in conjunction with the materials that precede and follow them. You must always read the text sections that accompany a map before attempting to analyze it. This will contextualize the image and help you understand its meaning.

When you analyze a map, begin by focusing on the most obvious information it contains. Students often look at a map briefly and assume they understand it. Try to slow down your reading of a map by noting its title and the areas that are presented in it. Once you know what areas the map outlines, begin to expand your thinking. Where possible, make inferences about the historical period the map is describing. Use the TARGET strategy described below to unlock the information a map contains.

When you TARGET a map, you determine its:

Title: Try to connect the title to the Focus Question addressed in the chapter opener.

Area(s): Which specific geographic areas does the map show? Don't forget to examine the key.

Regions: Which region(s) seem to be undergoing changes or developments? Infer the meaning of these changes.

Groups: Which group(s) might be affected by changes or developments? Infer the meaning of these developments for the groups involved.

Economic: Issues raised by development. (Note that military or political maps might not have this information.)

Theme: What is the central theme of the map? What is its message or overall point? Recall the title of the map.