

A SHAPELY STATE

Purpose

- To visualize the shape of the state of Texas
- To identify physical boundaries and adjacent national and international political boundaries
- To create a map of the state that demonstrates knowledge of relative distance and direction, river patterns, and latitude/longitude boundaries

TEKS Standards

Grade 4 Social Studies

(7) Geography. The student understands the concept of regions. The student is expected to (A) describe a variety of regions in Texas and the United States such as political, population, and economic regions that result from patterns of human activity.

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to (D) create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies.

Grade 7 Social Studies

(1- 6) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference and how individuals, events, and shaped the history of Texas.

(9) Geography. The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas. The student is expected to (A) locate the Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, and Coastal Plains regions and places of importance in Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries such as major cities, rivers, natural and historic landmarks, political and cultural regions, and local points of interest; (B) compare places and regions of Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics.

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to (D) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

Time: 1-2 class periods

Grade Levels: 3rd -7th

Materials: giant map, plastic chains, cones, vinyl spot markers, 12 X 12 sheets of medium weight drawing paper for torn-out map

Instructional Information

The process of walking on the map and then tearing out a shape focuses attention on the spatial details. Geographic concepts of distance, direction, size, and shape become concrete concepts as students actively engage in multiple modes of learning. The torn map establishes a strong foundation for

subsequent study with the Giant Traveling Map of Texas. The simplicity of the task encourages students to continue to improve the accuracy and “to make a better one.”

Student Activity/Assessment

1. In small groups, walk slowly around the boundaries of Texas, beginning at the southernmost tip of the state. Note which boundaries follow rivers and which are straight lines based on latitude and longitude lines.
2. Measure the distances across Texas using classmates as the units of measurement. How many students can stand shoulder to shoulder at the widest part of Texas – west to east? Measure the distance from the Red River to the southern tip of Texas. How many students that way? More or less than the width? Now measure just the north-south distance of the panhandle. Add that to the north-south distance from you measured before. How does the north/south distance compare with the east/west distance? Compare the east/west distance of the panhandle with the east/west distance from the New Mexico border to El Paso?
3. Measure the distance around Texas. How many students does it take to outline the whole state – on their knees with elbows extended? If students laid on the map, head to toe, how many would be needed to outline the state?
4. If you want to measure another way, use the chains and the scale printed on the map to figure out the distances in miles.
5. Step back from the map and look at it again, paying attention to the distances, directions, boundaries, and overall shape. Close your eyes and visualize it. Now you are ready to tear out your own working map of Texas. No drawing, no pencils, no scissors. When you are finished, label places you will need to remember – rivers, surrounding states and nations, and perhaps some major cities. Continue to add important places to your personal map of Texas. Perhaps even a buffalo or longhorn or state flag.

Extension: Critical Historical Thinking

In what ways do historical events influence the shape of our state? Why does Texas have a panhandle? Why does the western border stop following the Rio Grande? Why does it turn north where it does? Why is the Eastern border marked by Sabine River; the northern border uses the Red River?

1) Adams – Onis Treaty 1819. The Red River was an important avenue of commerce for the United States, eventually flowing into Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. It had been the limit of Spanish holding against French. Thirty two degrees was the north/south line between rivers that marked the boundary with the Adams – Onis Treaty. The Red River boundary line continued west to 100th meridian, then due north to the Arkansas River, marking the panhandle’s eastern boundary. The treaty makers chose this boundary since they could not determine the exact location of the headwaters of the Red River in New Mexico. (The Red River headwaters is actually east of Santa Fe, New Mexico and the headwaters of the Arkansas River is in southern Colorado.)

2) The northern panhandle boundary was determined by the U.S. issue of slavery leading up to the Civil War. Missouri Compromise of 1820 agreed to allow slavery only in states south of 36 degrees 30

minutes. Texas joined the Union as a slave state and gave to the U.S. all the land north of that latitude line. It was known as Oklahoma Territory.

3) The southern boundary was determined by the Treaty with Mexico, 1836, saying that the Mexican Army would withdraw to south of Rio Grande.

4) With the Compromise of 1850, Texas sold all land west of 103 and north of Rio Grande/New Mexico southern border to US to help pay debts of Republic of Texas.

5) El Paso, on the Rio Grande, is about 32 degrees. Formerly, the land of Texas extended west and north of the present boundary. This line was the border between Mexico and what was designated as New Mexico.

Assessment (informal)

Students tear out a map of Texas using light-weight card stock. With the “map” they will demonstrate knowledge of the shape of Texas and will identify boundaries by labeling Red River, Rio Grande, and Sabine River. In other lessons, students will use map symbols to show additional Texas Rivers, selected cities, and physical landmarks. They will use colors to show physical regions and write descriptions on the back of the study map.

Resource: Image of Torn Map

