

Skills Plus

Analyzing Primary Sources

Interpreting and Thinking About Objects from the Past

In this section, you will learn to examine historical objects left behind by others. These objects are called “primary sources.” Every day you leave behind some sort of evidence of your life – even if it’s only a milk carton from the cafeteria. Some objects become important for studying history, however. By studying these objects, we can learn more about the lives of individuals and groups from the past.

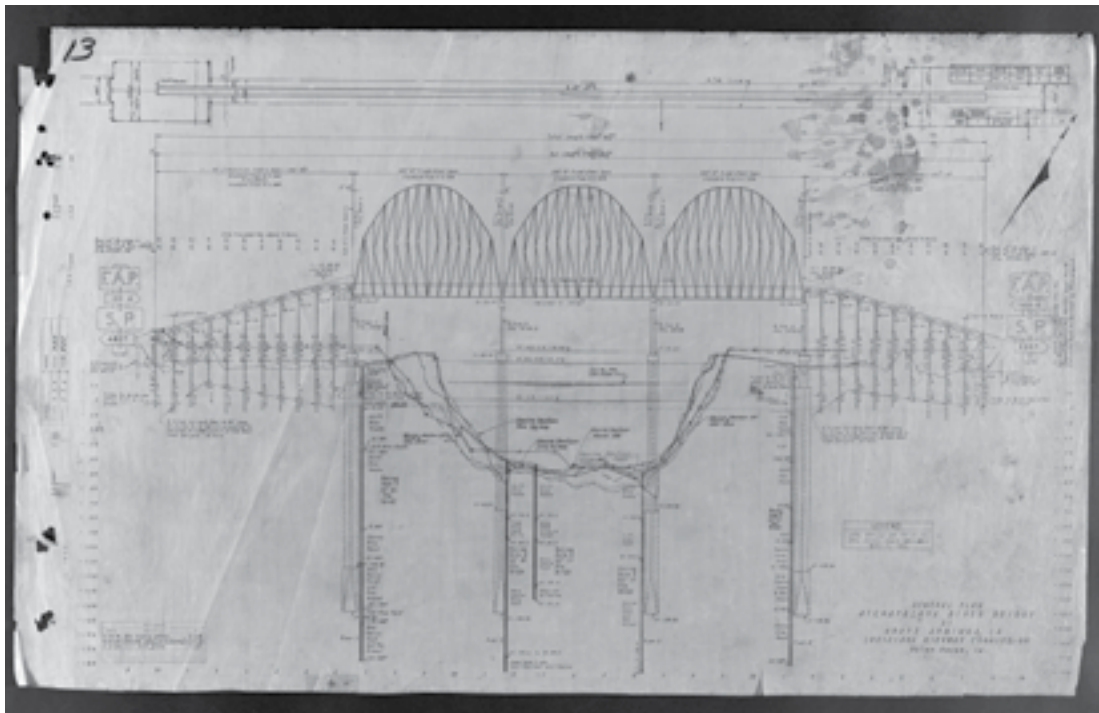
There are many types of primary sources. Here are a few examples.

- artifacts
- business documents
- diaries
- government documents
- letters
- oral histories
- photographs
- political cartoons
- maps
- stamps and coins

A *primary source* is something created at the time of an event that is part of a person’s direct experience. It is an original item that has survived through time. A *secondary source*, on the other hand, may have been created at the time of an event, but may also have been created later. Such a source documents the experience of others. This textbook, an encyclopedia, and a newspaper are examples of secondary sources.

The pictures that follow demonstrate some other examples.

This artifact is a builder’s plan sheet used in the construction of the Krotz Springs Bridge spanning the Atchafalaya River in St. Landry Parish.



GENERAL PLAN, SHEET 13 - Krotz Springs Bridge, Public Domain: Library of Congress

This historical map of Louisiana is from the 1814 edition of *Carey's General Atlas of the World*. Notice the “territories” that surround Louisiana.



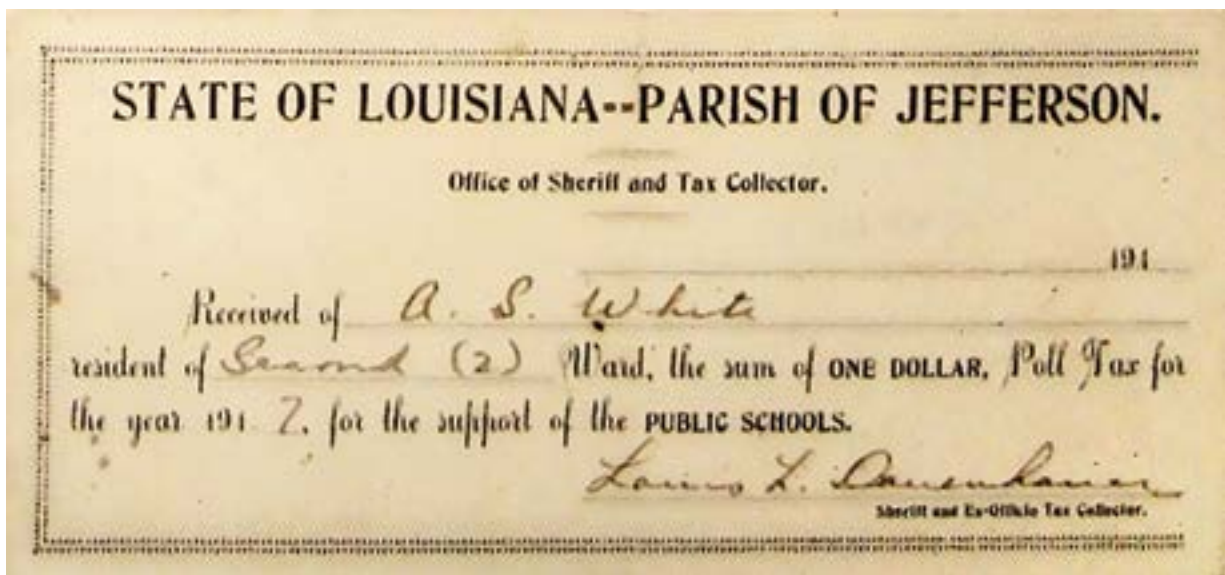
Public Domain: Library of Congress

This silver dollar coin, designed by artist Christian Gobrecht, was minted in New Orleans in 1860. The "O" is the mark used to identify coins produced at the New Orleans Mint.



Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

This government form is a receipt for payment of a poll tax in Jefferson Parish in 1917.



Photographed by Infrogmation; Licensed under Public domain via Wikipedia

Analyzing Written Documents

Written documents can be rich sources for understanding our past. Human activities may create many artifacts, but the written word provides insight into the activities and thinking of people in a personal way.

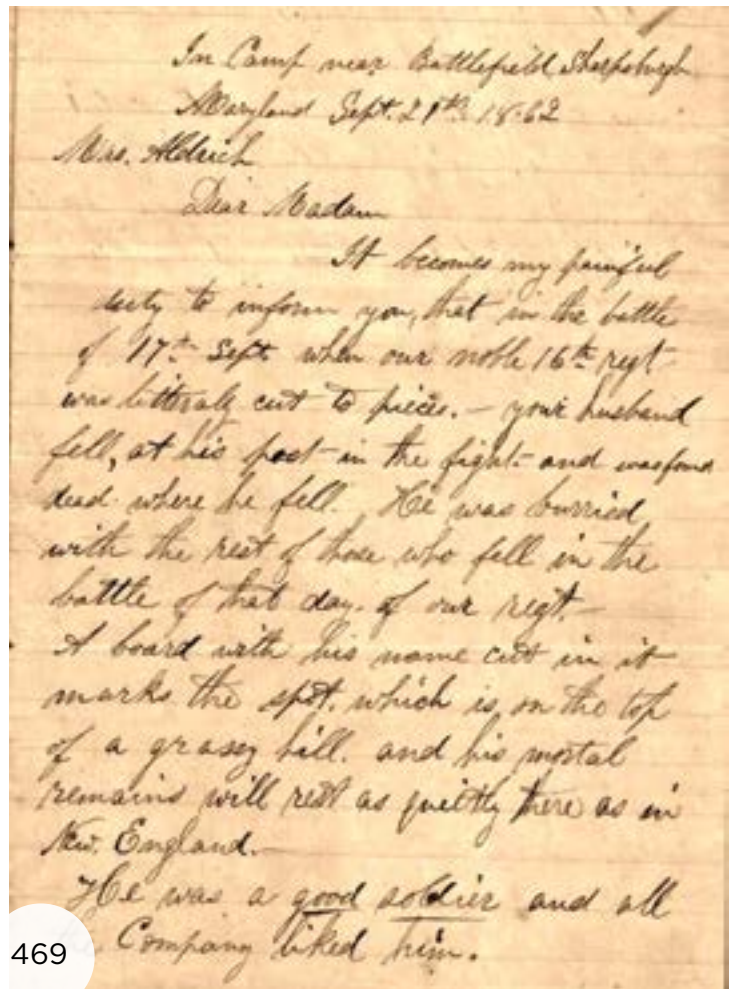
There are many types of written documents. Whether a document is a primary source or not depends on the definition given on page 466. Remember, a primary source document must be a document from the direct, personal experience of a person living at the time of an event. Some of these documents may have been published or made part of the public records of a government, such as an executive order given by the governor. Others may be personal, such as a letter from a World War II soldier writing to his mother.

Here are some examples of types of written documents that might be primary sources.

- advertisements, posters, and signs
- blueprints, diagrams, and sketches
- diaries and journals
- editorials in a newspaper
- family Bibles and recipes
- government documents
- letters
- telegrams

When examining written documents, think about the following questions.

1. What type of document is it and when was it written?
2. Is the document a primary or secondary source? What is the evidence for your thinking?
3. What are the unique characteristics of the document (letterhead, handwritten, typed, seals, notations, etc.)?
4. Who created the document? What was the author's title or position?
5. For whom was the document written?
6. What are the most important things the author of the document was trying to convey?
7. Why was the document written?
8. What evidence in the document helps you know the author's purpose?
9. What does this document tell you about life in Louisiana or the United States at the time that it was written?
10. What questions would you ask of this author?



EXECUTIVE ORDER KBB 05-31

Emergency Evacuation by Buses

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act, R.S. 29:721, *et seq.* .. confers upon the governor of the state of Louisiana emergency powers to deal with emergencies and disasters, including those caused by fire, flood, earthquake or other natural or man-made causes, to ensure that preparations of this state will be adequate to deal with such emergencies or disasters, and to preserve the lives and property of the citizens of the state of Louisiana;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Proclamation No. 48 KBB 2005, a state of emergency was declared and is currently in effect;

WHEREAS, R.S. 29:724(D)(4) provides that the governor, subject to any applicable requirements for compensation, may commandeer or utilize any private property if she finds it necessary to cope with the disaster or emergency;

WHEREAS, there is an immediate need for mass transportation to move citizens to shelters and other safe locations from disaster areas; and

WHEREAS, given the current exigent circumstances, buses are the most reasonable and practical mode of mass transportation to move our citizens to safety;

NOW THEREFORE I, KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO, Governor of the state of Louisiana, by virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution and laws of the state of Louisiana, do hereby order and direct as follows:

SECTION 1: Each Superintendent of Education for each school district in Louisiana that remains substantially operational following the passage of Hurricane Katrina shall contact the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness at 225-925-3916 and provide an inventory of school buses and bus drivers in their district;

SECTION 2: As determined by the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, such buses shall be made available to be used as necessary for the mass transportation of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, accompanying law enforcement personnel, and necessary supplies to from areas of concern to areas of safety;

SECTION 3: The Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness is hereby authorized to commandeer and utilize such buses for such purposes;

SECTION 4: Each Superintendent of Education for each school district in Louisiana that remains substantially operational following the passage of Hurricane Katrina shall coordinate with local law enforcement agencies and peace officers to ensure that at least one peace officer ride in each bus and at least two marked law enforcement vehicles accompany every ten buses;

SECTION 5: The Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness shall make efforts to work with the superintendents and local boards of education to minimize interruption of regular transportation of students;

SECTION 6: R.S. 17:158, relative to parish and city school boards providing free transportation to students, is hereby suspended until Sunday, September 25, 2005, unless reinstated sooner.

SECTION 7: This Order is effective upon signature and shall continue in effect until amended, modified, terminated, or rescinded by the governor, or terminated by operation of law.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand officially and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Louisiana, at the Capitol, in the city of Baton Rouge, on this 31st day of August, 2005.

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Governor

ATTEST BY THE GOVERNOR

Al Ater, Secretary of State

Hurricane Katrina made landfall near Buras on August 29, 2005. Two days later, Governor Kathleen Blanco issued Executive Order KBB 05-31. This document gives directions to each Superintendent of Education in the state. It explains, among other things, that each Superintendent must provide an inventory of the buses and bus drivers in his or her district and that the buses will be used to evacuate victims and transport law enforcement personnel and supplies.

Why do you think Governor Blanco issued this order? Who was affected by the order? Could this order have been issued any earlier? How effective were the school buses for transporting evacuees?

Source: <http://www.doa.la.gov/>

The word *Angelus* refers to a devotion in the Roman Catholic Church. This official document announced a special prayer requested by the St. Landry Council of Defense.

War Angelus Proclamation

Whereas, at its meeting of Tuesday, September third, nineteen hundred and eighteen, the following resolution was adopted by the St. Landry Parish Council of Defense, to-wit:

That Whereas, our great nation is engaged in a mighty and deadly struggle with the enemies of human liberty,

And Whereas, it is thought meet and proper that all patriotic American citizens should each day humbly bow in petition to the Almighty God to have our noble defenders in his special keeping and to bestow wisdom on and guide our leaders that they may finally lead us to victory in the righteous cause for which we do battle, bringing back to us our noble and loved ones.

Now, Therefore, be it resolved that we hereby declare throughout the confines of the Parish of St. Landry the daily observance of the WAR ANGELUS and we hereby set apart four minutes each day to be devoted to the sole purpose of prayer, beginning at six p.m. each evening, and during said four minutes all persons throughout the Parish shall uncover themselves and cease their labors, wherever they may be, and raise their heart in humble petition to the Divine Ruler. That all bells throughout the Parish of St. Landry be rung for half a minute, beginning at 6 p.m., each and every day.

Now, Therefore, in order to carry into effect said resolution declaring the observance of the WAR ANGELUS throughout the Parish of St. Landry, I, Edward M. Boagni, Chairman of the Council of Defense of the Parish of St. Landry, do issue this, my proclamation, calling upon all loyal American citizens throughout the parish to observe said WAR ANGELUS and to assist in carrying it into force and effect, and I also call upon all those who own or control bells throughout the parish, whether public or private, to have said bells rung according to the above resolution, and I hereby fix 6 p.m. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 1918, as the day and hour at which the said WAR ANGELUS shall be observed and go into effect.

(Signed) **E. M. BOAGNI**, Chairman, St. Landry Council of Defense.

Attest: GEO W. STUBBS, Secretary.

WAR ANGELUS PROCLAMATION

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That Whereas, our great nation is engaged in a mighty and deadly struggle with the enemies of human liberty.

And Whereas, millions of our young men have responded to the call of our country and rallied to the defense of the flag.

And Whereas, it is thought meet and proper that all patriotic American citizens should each day humbly bow in petition to the Almighty God to have our noble defenders in his special keeping and to bestow wisdom on and guide our leaders that they may finally lead us to victory in the righteous cause for which we do battle, bringing back to us our noble and loved ones.

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Chairman, St. Landry Council of Defense.

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GEO. W. STUBBS, Secretary.

Source: Louisiana Council of Defense collection, Manuscripts Collection 847, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

The Council of National Defense was a federal organization given the responsibility of coordinating the war effort during what became known as World War I. Its job was to carry out defense plans and policies and coordinate efforts with state branches. The Louisiana State Council of Defense had among its duties organizing community councils. These groups contributed to the war effort by conducting patriotic activities, managing construction projects and gathering materials, and organizing the manpower needed for these activities. The chairman of the local chapter in St. Landry Parish issued this proclamation to take effect September 12, 1918.

Why do you think Mr. Boagni issued this proclamation? What would have been the reaction of the community? Would people in your community today find this proclamation unusual? How would this type of proclamation have supported the war effort?

Interpreting Political Cartoons

A political cartoon is a drawing that makes a political statement about a current event. Political cartoons have three main parts.

The first part can be identified as its *content*. A political cartoon can focus on a person, event, issue, or theme. For example, the president, congressional leadership, a war, the economy, terrorist groups, or special interests often provide the content of a political cartoon.

The second part of a political cartoon focuses on the *methods* the cartoonist uses to convey the message. Good cartoons deal with emotion and get their message across in a simple and often humorous way, usually with few words. Some of the methods used include caricature (usually an exaggerated feature of a person), symbolism (using a word, icon, or picture to represent something), stereotyping (using a trait to apply to a group of people), irony (portraying a contradiction between the intended and usual meaning of words), and sarcasm (using mockery or bitterness).

The third part of a political cartoon is its *purpose*. Sometimes the cartoons support or oppose causes. They reflect the cartoonist's opinion or political point of view. To extract meaning from political cartoons, viewers must know the language of cartoons as well as have background knowledge of the subject being presented.

To analyze political cartoons, you should think about the following questions.

- When was the cartoon published? Knowing this will let you know if the cartoon was published at the time an event was taking place or at a different time.
- Who created the cartoon? It will be helpful to know if the cartoonist comes from a particular political, social, or cultural background.
- Are there any titles or captions? These help to identify the subject of the cartoon.
- Who are the people, places, or events that are shown? Knowing who or what is depicted in the cartoon will help place it in a historical or political setting.
- What is the point of view of the cartoonist? Note the size and mannerisms of the figures as well as their interaction with one another. Note the use of exaggeration or facial expression to convey a point.



The Spirit of '76. On to the Senate!
Published in *The Suffragist*
30 Jan 1915.
Artist: Nina Allender
Public Domain: Wikipedia



The Spirit of '76 (aka Yankee Doodle)
Archibald MacNeal Willard
circa 1875

In this example, the cartoonist has shown three women in a pose similar to a famous patriotic painting, *The Spirit of '76*. The painting was widely known as a symbol of American patriotism. It depicts three Revolutionary War soldiers of different ages, one of them wounded, marching across a battlefield in the face of danger. The painting was created as part of our country's 100th birthday celebration in 1876, though the events shown are supposed to be from 1776.

The artist in the 1915 cartoon chose this patriotic symbol to make a comparison to the battle American women faced in trying to gain the right to vote (suffrage). A proposed 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would have given women that right. The amendment was introduced in 1878, but only after the election of 1912 did the amendment begin to get the support that it would need to become law. Women had faced great opposition as they worked for passage. The cartoonist is offering encouragement to women to keep working for the right to vote, which did not come until 1920. Although the amendment became the law of the land in 1920, Louisiana did not ratify the amendment until 1970!

Do you think the cartoon would have been effective in encouraging those who worked for women's suffrage? Why or why not?

Analyzing Photographs

There is a saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Many students, however, consider photographs much like written text. They don’t really focus on what can be learned from them.

When examining a photo, consider not only its content but also the intent of the photographer or artist who created it.

When you examine a photograph, look for answers to these obvious questions.

- Who or what is depicted in the photo (people, objects, activities)?
- When was the photo taken?
- Where was the photo taken?

There are other things, however, you should think about to make the examination of the photo more meaningful. Most of these considerations concern why the photo was taken or why the author or editor chose to use a particular photo in a particular newspaper, magazine, book, or website. When taking a photograph, the photographer decides where to stand, how to frame the subject, and what to include in the background. Therefore, you should ask some additional questions when examining photos.

- Is the picture a candid shot or was it staged?
- Why do you think the photographer emphasized certain features in the photograph?
- What do you think is the real focus of the photograph?
- What might have happened right before or right after the photo was taken?

A strategy for studying a photograph is to imagine the photo being divided into four quadrants, as shown on the next page. Spend a few moments looking at each quadrant separately. What do you notice? By looking at only one area of the photograph, you may discover features that your eye would miss when looking at the picture as a whole. For instance, in the top right quadrant, there are a series of bare light bulbs. What does this fact tell you about the working conditions? Look at the bottom right. What is the floor made of? What is on the floor? How might these answers tell you more about the working conditions of the people?

Primary sources such as this photograph help us understand that history is about real people. They give us the ability to “touch” the past in a unique way and make a connection with those who lived before us.



Photo by Lewis Hine, March 1911. Rosy is an eight-year-old oyster shucker who works steadily all day from about 3:00 a.m. to about 5:00 p.m. in the Dunbar Cannery. The baby will shuck as soon as she can handle the knife.

Lewis Hine worked as an investigative photographer for the National Child Labor Committee. His work and the work of the committee helped to shed light on the problem of child labor in America.

Why do you think he chose this location? What do you think Hine wanted to emphasize in the photograph? How does the caption help the photographer tell his story? How do you think people reacted to the photograph?

Interpreting Maps

What is a map? The International Cartographic Association defines a map as a “representation, normally to scale and on a flat medium, of a selection of material or abstract features on, or in relation to, the surface of Earth.” To understand this definition, examine the meaning of the words.

representation: a picture or symbol that stands for something else; a model

scale: a ratio of size on a map

medium: the substance used to create artwork

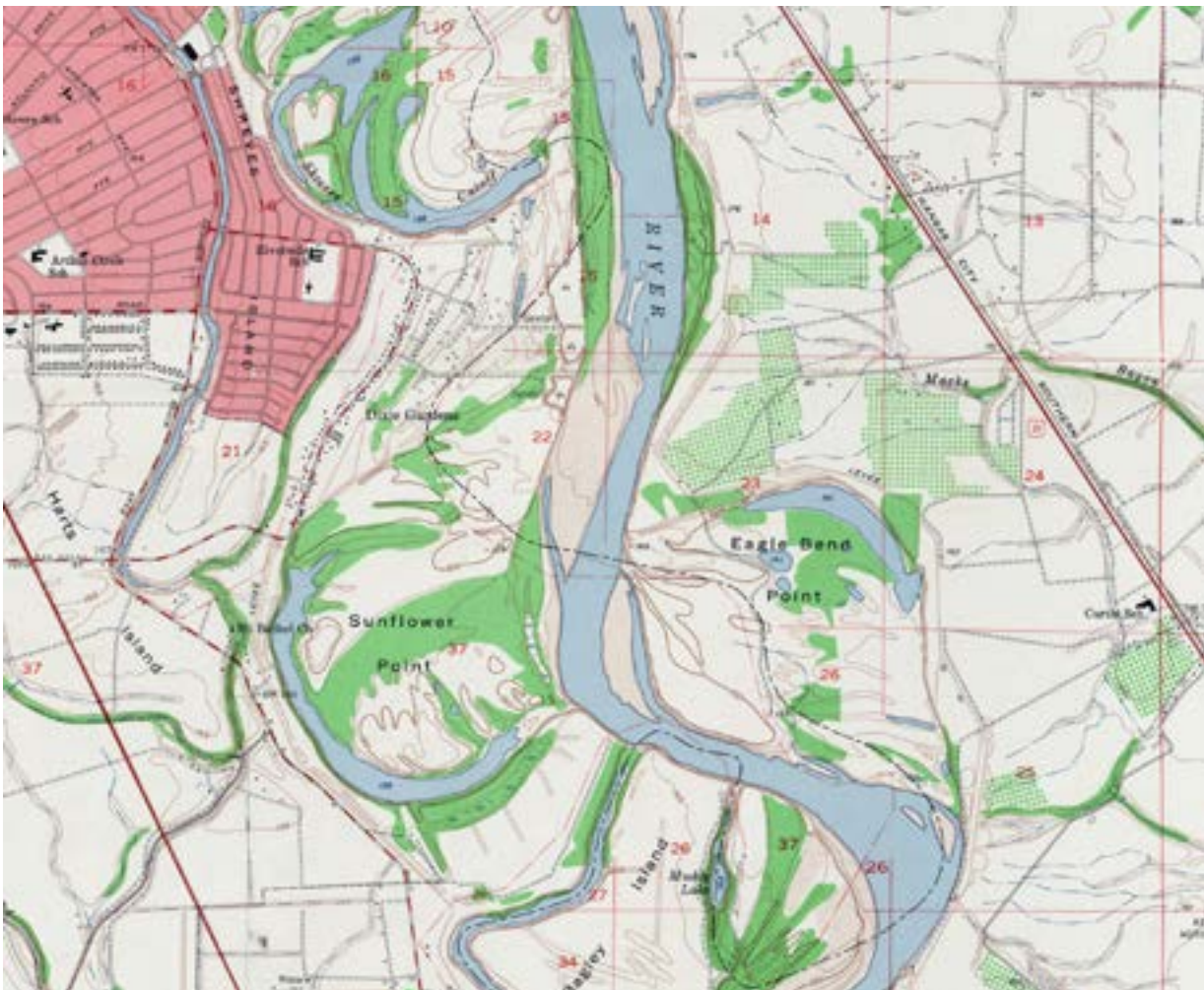
surface: the outermost layer of something

Earth: our planet

A map, then, is not a photograph but a *representation* of real places on the surface of Earth. This type of representation, or model, is created to scale with a unit of measure on the map matching a unit of measure on Earth. Most importantly, maps are created to inform users of particular information important to the map’s creator, known as a cartographer.

A map provides information in a graphic way. There are many types of maps.

A topographic map shows the relief, or elevation and slope, of the land.



A physical map shows landforms like deserts, mountains, and plains and gives the user some idea of the terrain.



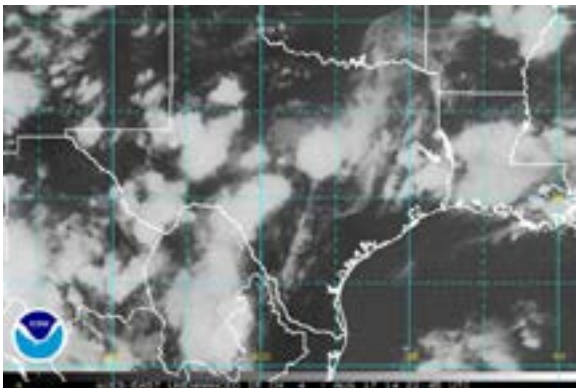
A political map shows boundaries created by humans such as countries, states, parishes, or cities. Some important natural features may be labeled.



A historical map shows information about a place in the past.



A satellite map is created from images taken by satellites in orbit around Earth. Labels and symbols may be added according to the purpose of the map.



Why do people make maps? Maps are made for a variety of purposes. Some are created to give users a general overview of an area. Some common uses for maps are to show climate, weather, regions, movement, transportation, distance, cities, states, countries, waterways, transportation routes, natural resources, resources, and population.

When looking at a map, there are some questions you should ask in order to understand the map's information.

- What is the *type* of map?
- What does the *title* tell you about the subject and purpose of the map?
- What is in the *legend*, or key? Is there a *compass rose* so that you can orient the map?
- What is the *date* of the map?
- What type of *grid system* is used?
- What type of *information* is found on the map?
- What is the *scale* of the map, and what does it tell you about the map's information?
- What other information is on the map?

This example is a weather map that has a historical connection. The title explains that the map is showing the location of Hurricane Katrina. The legend gives information about the hurricane on August 26, 2005. The map shows the location of the center of the hurricane including latitude and longitude, and it shows the potential path of the storm for the next three days. The map's scale shows that the map is covering a large area about 1,500 miles across. The path of the hurricane was predicted to be toward North Florida. New Orleans was at the edge of the predicted path of the storm. The latitude and longitude helped people mark the eye of the hurricane.



Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the coast of Louisiana on Monday, August 29, 2005. Just three days earlier, forecasters had a different view of where the hurricane would come ashore.

How does this map help you understand the events leading up to the landfall of Katrina? What other information would be useful in studying this time period?