



**Title:** Seeing Through Maps  
**Topic:** Different perspectives/ Different Purposes

Description: Participants will attempt to evaluate maps for accuracy, before a brief discussion about how to test maps for accuracy, the biases built into each mapping perspective, the ways in which multiple maps can be accurate, and how similar principles apply to all other ways or representing reality.

**Instructions to facilitator:** Have students rate the three maps (pages 2 and 3) for accuracy. In small groups or as a think-pair-share activity. For your background about these maps, (suggested that you don't share this with the students at the beginning of the activity):

**Map 1:** A security guard at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, drew this map of the best way to get from Duke to Angier Avenue. (1993).

**Map 2:** This is a modern outline reconstruction of the 1569 map on which Gerardus Mercator introduced his famous projection. Notice the way the rectangles forming the grid get longer and longer as you move toward the North and South Poles. What's important here—where we are concerned with the purposes maps serve—is what Mercator's map was *for*. The map made it possible for sailors to draw a straight line to their destination and sail along it. Any straight line drawn on Mercator's map is a line of constant compass bearing. You'd draw a line to your destination, set your compass to the bearing of the line, follow it and, making allowances for winds and tides, get where you wanted to go.

**Map 3:** What a different world this seems to be. This is called the Peters map, named for Arno Peters who introduced it in 1974. Unlike Mercator, whose purpose was to help sailors, Peters' purpose was to help the rest of us. Peters believed that widespread use of Mercator maps for purposes that had nothing to do with navigation built up in our minds a seriously distorted image of the world. This is a projection of the world that gives areas their true relative size. You can easily see how much larger South America is than Europe. On the other hand, compass bearings are not straight on this map. Maps really are like points of view.

Source of all descriptions and maps: Wood, Denis Kaiser, Ward Abrams, Bob. *Seeing Through Maps, Many Ways to See the World*. Amherst, MA: ODT, Inc., 2006

Sample Questions:

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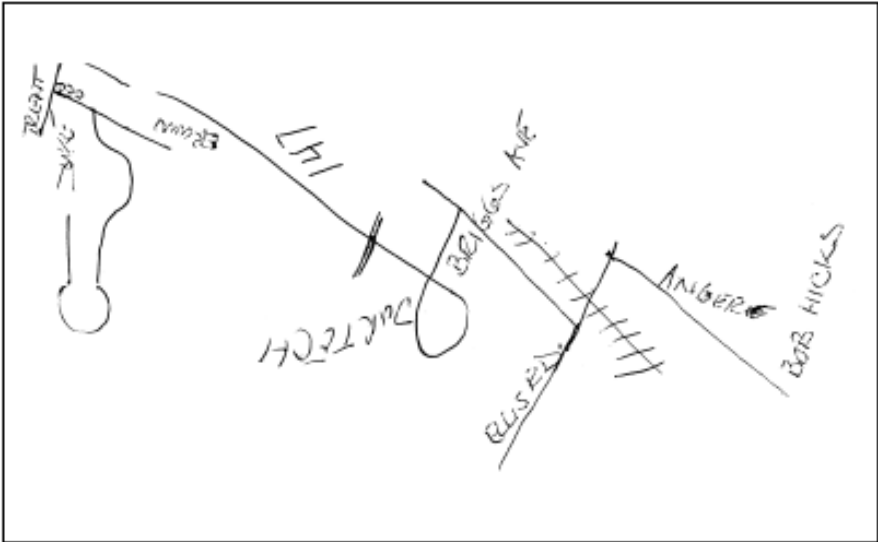
After the activity is over, debrief with your students:

1. Did you find this task difficult? Why or why not?
2. Why is it important to consider points of view we may disagree with?
3. What does it mean to be "accurate?" Does the definition change based on the purpose of a map?

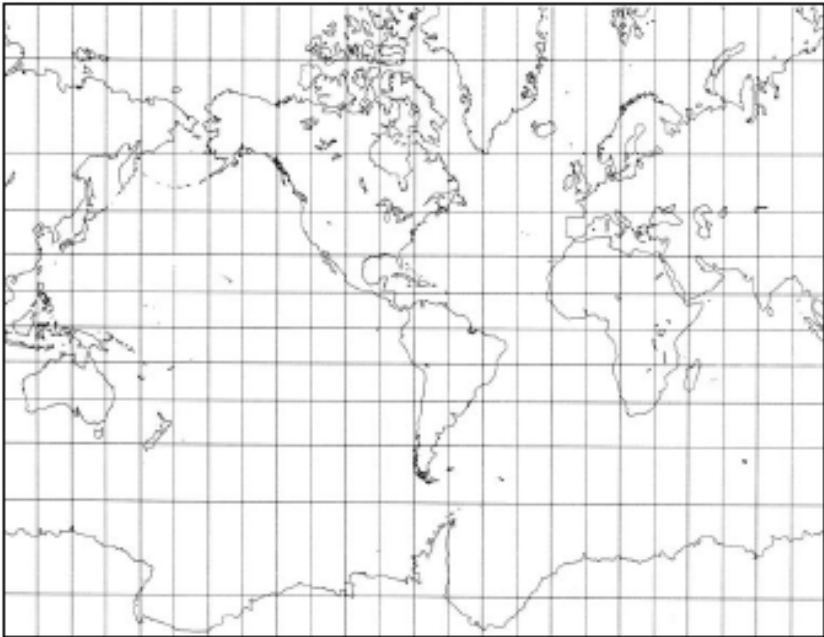
# How Maps Tell the Truth of the World

Instructions; For each of the maps below, evaluate how well you think it represents its intended territory using a scale of 1-10, with 1 not at all accurate and 10 complete accuracy.

1. Accuracy = \_\_\_\_\_



2. Accuracy = \_\_\_\_\_



3. Accuracy = \_\_\_\_\_

