

A Curriculum Guide to

The Map Trap

By Andrew Clements

About the Book

This map-tastic middle-grade story from Andrew Clements gives the phrase “uncharted territory” a whole new meaning!

Alton Barnes loves maps. He’s loved them ever since he was little, and not just for the geography. Because maps contain more information than just locations, and that’s why he likes to draw maps as well as read them. Regular point-A-to-point-B ones, sure, but also maps that explain a whole lot more—like what he really thinks about his friends. And teachers. Even the principal. So when Alton’s maps are stolen from his locker, there’s serious trouble on the horizon . . . and he’ll need some impressive cartographic skills to escape it.

From “a genius of gentle, high-concept tales set in suburban middle schools” (*The New York Times*), this stand-alone story is off the charts.

Prereading Activities

The following activities contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.4, 5, 6, 7) (RI.4–6.4) (RF.4–5.4a) (W.4–6.8) (SL.4–6.1)

1. The title of the book is *The Map Trap*. What do you think the title means? As you thumb through the pages and look at illustrations and chapter headings, what do you think this story is going to be about? What predictions could you make about the characters and what might happen over the course of the story? As a class, keep a chart of your ideas and take note of what happens and if your predictions are correct.
2. Maps come in a variety of shapes and formats. Make a KWHL chart (what do I know, what do I want to know, how do I find out, what have I learned) about the different kinds of maps students are familiar with, i.e. states, driving, weather, relief, ocean, planets, etc. Where can you find maps? What do people use them for? What is a book of maps called and where can you find it? What other kinds of maps might there be? As you read through the story, make a list of the kinds of maps that are mentioned, note what they might look like, and the kind of information that is presented in them. If you could make a map, what would it be, and what would it look like?
3. List the following map terms and ask students if they know what they are and why they are used:
compass rose symbol route
legend or key landmark scale
4. Ask students if they are familiar at all with how maps have evolved with the use of technology. Mention things such as GPS (What do the letters stand for?) and how it works, Google Earth, and

geocaching. Ask what they think the role of technology plays in the story, and how it might be used. Continue to add information and ideas to the KWHL chart for these added areas.

Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.1, 3, 4, 10) (RL.4–5.7) (RI.4–6.4, 7) (RF.4–5.3a, 4a) (L.4–6.1, 2, 3, 4, 5) (SL.4–6.1, 2, 4, 5) (RH.6–8.7) (W.4–6.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9)

1. Chapter 2 has the following quote:

“He discovered that making a good map was complicated, much more complicated than he had ever imagined. And even though he didn’t like math very much, he made himself learn about fractions and measurement so that his maps could be as accurate as possible. He didn’t really notice it, but during fourth grade, maps began to turn him into a very precise thinker and a very careful observer.”

What does this tell us about Alton? Why does map-making require precision, observation, and math? Do all maps require this? What skills does it take to read a map? Is it the same as reading a story? Can you tell a story with maps? Compare and contrast different kinds of maps and what they require to give us the information we are looking for.

2. *Foreshadowing* or guessing ahead is a literary device by which an author hints at certain developments that may come later in the story. What is the author trying to tell us with the following?

“But any good mapmaker knows that the way things *look* and the way things *are* can sometimes be different. Very different.”

As you are reading, cite evidence from the story that demonstrates that things are not always what they seem.

3. Why do authors such as Andrew Clements use figurative language and specific word choices in their stories? How does the author integrate visual information into the story? Find examples of similes, metaphors, descriptive language, and visual information as you read. Keep track of these examples in your journal, and note pages where you found them. How did this help your understanding of what was happening at that point in the story?

4. How does the illustrator use pictures and details to develop the characters and setting of the story? Give an example of an illustration that provides details for a character or an event.

5. Alton mentions that mapmakers don’t make stuff up—they present facts. He then goes into detail about Miss Wheeling’s brain. Using the description in Chapter 5, draw a map of Miss Wheeling’s brain. Be sure to include all the areas and make them in proportion to how Alton presents them.

6. Observe one of your parents, grandparents, brother, or sister for a few days. Draw a map of their brain based on the details you have observed in the same way that Alton drew his observations. Keep track of your observations in your journal so that you can be precise with your drawing.

7. The title of Chapter 3 is “Like Switzerland.” What does this mean? What word in the chapter helps our understanding of this chapter title, and what do the characters do to further our understanding of the way things look and the way things are? Give examples and specific word choices.
8. Describe Alton, the main character in the story, and explain how his actions contribute to the sequence of events. Create a character map as you read through the story. Try using: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/character-30199.html>
9. Using an interactive resource, create a story map of *The Map Trap*—how the events unfold as well as how the characters respond or change as the story moves towards a resolution. Resources can be found here: <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/storymap/> and <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/De/PD/instr/strats/storymapping/index.html>
10. In Chapter 13, Alton decides to “pre-apologize.” What do you think this means? Why do you think Alton feels it’s necessary to do this? Is pre-apologizing a good strategy?
11. How do Alton and Quint respond to the events and challenges of the missing maps and the ransom notes? Are their ideas right? What would you do if something of yours was taken and you started to receive ransom notes? Why didn’t they report the theft to the teacher? Who else could they have asked for help? Reflect on when it’s right to ask for help and when you should try to figure things out on your own. Brainstorm with a neighbor about the pluses and minuses of the decisions made by Alton and Quint when the maps were discovered missing.
12. On a map, locate the area in the United States that is known as “four corners.” Name the states that are the four corners. What makes this area unique? What is important about this area for Alton?
13. Alton not only diagrammed the students in the lunchroom with a Venn diagram, but he was precise with his language and descriptions. As a result, Quint has an “aha” moment. Describe the Venn diagram, Quint’s reaction, what it means, and the implications of a map like this being found. Describe how you would feel if you were in a map that you felt wasn’t really you. What would you do, and how would you change things? Explain why a Venn diagram is a good example for what Alton is trying to show. Try using: http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/venn_diagrams/.
14. In the story, Alton uses a cell phone and GPS technology. He is very excited when he finally gets his own cell phone and can text his friends. Write a persuasive essay about whether elementary children should have cell phones. Be sure to include a strong thesis statement, give reasons with evidence from the story, and have a well-constructed paragraph.
15. Technology has evolved so much that it’s part of our everyday lives. We have access to maps and directions on cell phones, laptops, tablets, GPS devices, and computers. Write a paragraph about how the use of maps and GPS has impacted your life. Think about the ways that you have used these maps and devices in your home or school life, and how you’ve benefited from this technology. Is this form of progress good or bad? How are your experiences the same or different from that of Alton in *The Map Trap*?

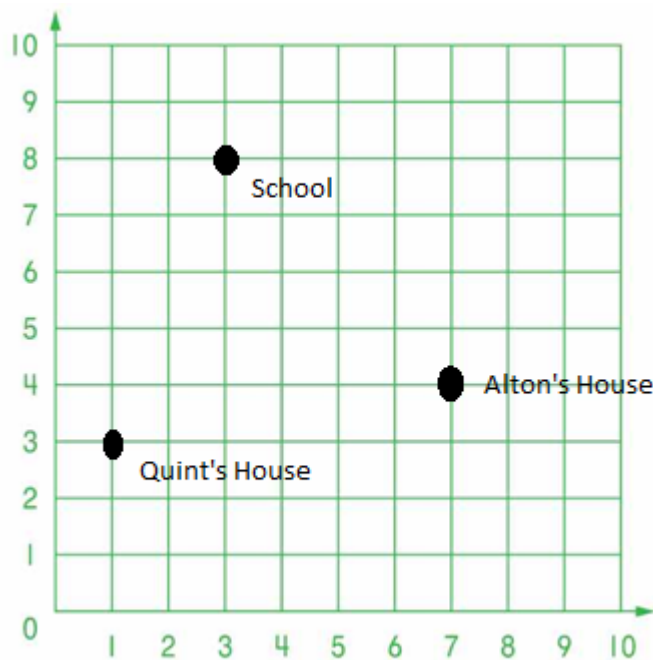
Activities

The following activities contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.1, 3, 4, 10) (RL.4–5.7) (RI.4–6.4, 7) (RF.4–5.3a, 4a) (L.4–6.1, 2, 3, 4, 5) (SL.4–6.1, 2, 4, 5) (RH.6–8.7) (W.4–6.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9)
Standards for Mathematics: (4.MD.A.1, 4.MD.B.4, 4.G.A.1) (4.MD.A.1, 5.G.A.2)

1. In Chapter 7, Alton has written precise directions so that he can navigate from his house to Quint’s house. Using a program such as Google Earth, locate your town, street, and home address. Find the directions and exact distances from your house to school riding your bike. Using a piece of graph paper, plot out your directions and distances in a coordinate grid, so that someone could follow your directions. Be sure to include your starting point (home) and ending point (school). Write the ordered pair (0,0) by the starting point and then the X and Y points for each turn that you have to make to get to school. Be sure to connect the points in order. You will also need to include a scale that shows how much distance each graph square represents, and a compass rose with N, S, E, and W directions correctly labeled.

Bonus: challenge yourself to put your distance scale in both US and Metric measurements.

2. Using the coordinate grid below, which ordered pair represents Alton’s School, Alton’s house, and Quint’s house? Explain a possible path from the school to Quint’s house, the school to Alton’s house, and Alton’s house to Quint’s house. Using information from the book, calculate the distance from each place for Alton. Have your scale be in both US and Metric measurements. Using the same format, make a coordinate grid from your house to the library and to the supermarket. Explain a possible path to each place. Use Google Earth to find the distance between places, and then make your scale using that information. Again, include both US and Metric measurements in your scale.



More manipulative grids and backgrounds can be found here:
<http://lakeviewtcsd.weebly.com/glencoe-virtual-manipulative-work-mats.html>

3. Build with Chrome <https://www.buildwithchrome.com/> is an exciting way to build with Legos and have Google maps as your baseplate. If you were Alton, what would you think of this site? What would you build? In Chapter 10, Alton lists a variety of maps and map types. Could any of these maps be built with Legos to represent items on a map? What kind of maps would you be interested in building? Or what would you build to place on your map as a three-dimensional object? What if you tried to build an object to put in your school parking lot? How would you know the scale and size? Work as a group to brainstorm ideas and how you could make your map and objects in Build with Chrome. Be sure to think about the sequence of your steps and the precision and math you would need to use for your project to be successful.

4. Geocaching is something Alton is very excited about. He's been participating for several years in the scavenger hunt and has created some of his own caches and added his own swag. Geocaching involves outdoor exploration, understanding map coordinates, and placing your own hidden treasures for others to find. Explore the official geocaching website: <http://www.geocaching.com/> to have a better understanding of why Alton is so excited about it. As a class, do an Internet search on the geocaching website to find caches in your area. Plan a route and/or field trip that gives you the opportunity to observe the landscape at different way points as you are searching for different geocaches. What would your route look like and how would you present your observations and findings?

5. One of the projects that Alton and Quint do is to research and create an historical map of the state of Illinois and its railroads. Using your library and the Internet, research historical landmarks in your state, and create a map that shows all of these landmarks (Example: California Missions, Civil War battlefields, westward movement trails, etc.). Create a map that includes a compass rose, key or legend, scale, landmarks, and symbols. Publish your map using a publishing program: <http://teachamazing.com/9-web-2-0-sites-to-publish-student-work/>.

6. Alton created maps about many things. These maps represented how he saw these things and how important they were for him. What is something that is important to you, and how could you represent this with a map? For example, you might have a great interest in shoes—how could you create a map showing this interest? Or you really love movie monsters—how could you make a map that shows movie monsters around the world? Use resources such as almanacs, atlases, databases, encyclopedias, and the Internet at your school or public library and create a map that represents you and your interests. Be sure to include features of regular maps (compass, scale, legend, landmarks, etc.) but don't be afraid to think "outside the map"!

Map Trap Word Bank: Tier 2 Vocabulary

Destination	Shatter	Collapse	Perceptive
Disbelief	Animated	Contour	Hilarious
Disrespectful	Portfolio	Gritted	Mastermind
Flurry	Cartography	Jangling	Clammy
Geocache	Neutral	Cartography	Self-conscious
Microscopic	Indirectly	Slumped	Instinctively
Scrunched	Astonish		

This curriculum guide was written in 2014 by Sharon Haupt, District Librarian, San Luis Coastal Unified School District, San Luis Obispo, CA.

This guide, written to align with the Common Core State Standards (www.corestandards.org) has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.