

Mapping the Arctic

This lesson was designed to promote map and primary source interpretation of Arctic exploration.

Objective: The student will examine maps of the Arctic region developed over time and develop map interpretation skills by responding to prompts. The student will read challenging text to find specific details related to Admiral Peary's successful attempt to reach the North Pole.

Grade Level: This lesson would be suitable for social science classes in grades 3-12.

Standards:

Geog1.a: Tools of Geography

Geog1.b: Spatial Thinking

Procedure:

Use the links to the resources on the corresponding story map to answer the questions that follow.

North Pole 1728

Why is Groenland only partially mapped in detail?

Arctic 1835

Notice that Groenland is now labeled as Greenland. Why is the detail more accurate on this map than the 1728 map?

Which explorer has come the closest to the North Pole as labeled on this map? What year did he and his expedition team reach that northernmost and highest point?

About what degree latitude did his exploration party reach?

Arctic 1879

What do the items in red lettering on the map indicate?

Which explorer in 1875 reached about the same degree latitude north as Parry's expedition in 1827?

What transportation method(s) do you think the explorers on this map used? Why?

Map of the North Pole regions 1907

For each of the following explorers, identify the highest point of northern latitude reached, the year his team reached it, and the country he represented: Nansen, Cagni, Peary.

Based on information from the map, why do you think each of these explorers reached his furthest point in the month of April?

Arctic 1912

Which explorer was the first to the North Pole and on what date did he reach it?

How do you think it could be determined that a person was actually standing at the North Pole?

Congressional recognition of Peary

By what method(s) was it determined that Peary had reached the North Pole?

What accounted for the success of this expedition over previous attempts to reach the North Pole?

Why was the return journey made more quickly than the outward journey?

Why do you think Peary's achievement was determined to be "the greatest geographical prize of the last three centuries?"