Teacher Resource

New World Map

EPISODE 27
15 September 2026

KEY LEARNING
Students will compare the Mercator and Equal Earth Projections.

CURRICULUM
HASS – Year 5 and 6
Locate, collect and organise information and data from primary and secondary sources in a range of formats.

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. What did the BTN story explain? Write a 3-4 sentence summary.
2. What is a cartographer?
3. The Mercator Projection was first drawn up to help…
4. Why was the Equal Earth map created?
5. How can maps influence the way people understand the world?

Activity: Class Discussion

Working in pairs or small groups, ask students to respond to the questions below **before** and **after** viewing the BTN story.

Before viewing the BTN story…

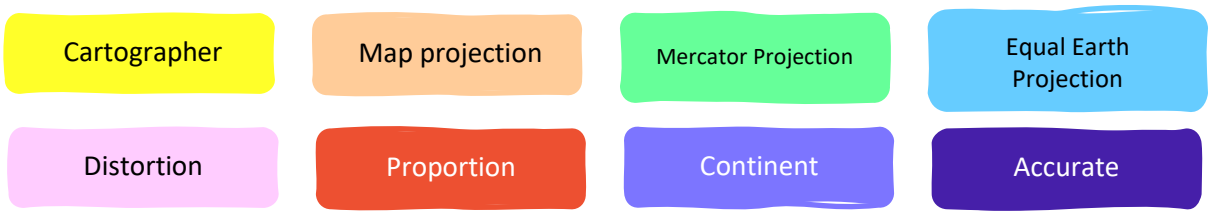
- What information can we learn from a map?
- What makes a map useful?
- Do you think a map can ever show the Earth exactly as it really is? Why or why not?
- Look at Greenland and Africa on a map. Which one appears larger?
- Can a map change the way we see the world?

After viewing the BTN story…

- When was the Mercator Projection first created?
- Why was it originally created?
- When was the Equal Earth projection invented?
- What happens to the size of land masses in the northern parts of the world on the Mercator projection?
- Why is it difficult to turn a sphere into a flat map?
- How does the Equal Earth projection attempt to solve this problem?
- Which map appears to show land areas more accurately?

Activity: Key Words

Students will brainstorm a list of key words that relate to the BTN New World Map story. Here are some words to get them started.



Ask students to write what they think is the meaning of each word (including unfamiliar words). They will swap definitions with a partner and ask them to add to or change the definition. Check these against the dictionary definition.

Activity: Compare Mercator and Equal Earth

Students will examine and compare the Mercator and Equal Earth projections. Download copies of the maps: Mercator Equal Earth Working in pairs, complete the following table:

What do you notice?	Mercator	Equal Earth
What happens to the size of continents near the poles?		
What happens to continents near the equator?		
How does the size of Greenland compare with Africa on each map? What do you notice?		
How does the size of Antarctica compare with South America on each map? What do you notice?		
What other differences can you see?		

Challenge

Choose five places on the maps—for example:

- Australia
- Africa
- Greenland
- Alaska
- North America

Rank them from smallest to largest as they appear on the map then research their actual land areas. Why don't the rankings on the map necessarily match the rankings in real life?

Activity: Do Maps Influence Us?

A map is more than a drawing or representation of an area; it can influence how people perceive places and continents. Ask students to respond to the following questions:

- If a country appears larger on a map, could people think it is more important or powerful? Give reasons for your answer.
- Could the way Africa is represented on a map influence people's understanding of the continent? Explain your answer.
- Why might accurate representation of different parts of the world matter?
- Is there such a thing as a completely unbiased map? Explain your thinking.

Useful Websites

- United Nations vote to change maps to more accurately represent size of Africa – Newsround
- Africa and Australia bigger, US smaller as UN votes to adopt a new world map – ABC News
- Map Future – BTN
- Modern Maps – BTN