



# East Texas Oil Boom

Maps are a tool that helps humans make sense of—and impose order onto—their environment. Maps can provide information about spatial relationships in the landscape (where things are in relation to each other), political boundaries, infrastructure and transportation routes, locations of significant events, geology, and many other things.

It is important to note that maps are subjective. What they include—and leave out—reflects the purpose, point of view, and priorities of their creator. It is the reader's job to decipher the code of what a map is (or is not) trying to communicate.

## 1 Summarize the General

(who, what, when, where, why?) (Map 1 and Map 2)

To fully understand a map, we must begin with its parts. Common features include a title, creator (could be an individual and/or an organization), date, symbols, boundaries, a legend or key, scale, etc. All of this information provides clues about the map's purpose(s). For both of your maps, identify the following:

	Map 1	Map 2
Title:		
Creator(s):		
Year & Place Created:		
Region(s) or area(s) shown:		
Summarize map topic (what is the map "about"?)		
Notable map features: (Compass rose, key, etc.)		

Next, discuss and record short answers on your own paper for the following questions:

- How do you think the map creator got the information shown in the map (for example, from firsthand measurements or observations? From another named or unnamed source)? What makes you think that?
- How reliable or accurate do you think the map is? Why or why not?
- Why do you think this map was created (what is its purpose)? What makes you think that?
- Historical context:** What political, social, economic, or other events or developments were happening around the time the map was created that would help us understand it better?

## 2 Examine the Specific

(Map 2)

- Make a list of details or observations from the map that stand out to you ("standing out" can include details or information that is confusing, seems significant, or reflects a pattern). If it helps, try to group your details or observations into types/categories.
- From that list, come up with at least three questions. These questions should be based on something that intrigues you about the map—a topic that, if you had to write a research paper based on this map, you would want to learn more about.

## 3 Plan the Next Step

An important part of understanding documents from the past is comparing them with other sources of evidence. Discuss in your group and record short answers to the following questions:

Which of the sources to the right would help you answer your questions? Give specific examples of what type of information they might have (as it relates to your questions).

What important information might your selected sources **not** provide you, or how might the information you find be unhelpful? Give specific examples.

Local & State Newspapers	Old business records (which businesses?)	City government records
Historic Photographs	Old railway records	Legal/court records
Federal or state records (U.S. Census, U.S. or Texas legislation)	Trade books/journals from the early 20th century (which trades or industries?)	Early 20th century maps of the area (contemporary maps)
Letters/Personal correspondence	Old oral history interviews (recordings or written transcripts)	Modern/recent map of the area
Published books written by scholars	Published or unpublished diaries and autobiographies	Talking today to an eyewitness with firsthand information



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## Glossary

- Compass Rose:** A centuries-old navigational symbol primarily found on compasses, maps, and nautical charts that shows the cardinal directions of north (N), east (E), south (S), and west (W).
- Escrow:** A financial arrangement in which a third party holds payments between two parties, thereby ensuring that all the terms of an agreement are met before the money transfer is finalized.
- Injunction:** A court order for an individual or organization to do (or stop doing) a specific action.
- Land Survey:** The practice of measuring, identifying, describing, and mapping property boundaries and physical features on and below the ground. Surveyors use math, science, and technology to perform their jobs. Land surveys are used by engineers, architects, land and mineral developers, government officials, lawyers, historians, and private citizens in a variety of ways.
- Notary or Notary Public:** A person authorized by a government authority to perform certain legal functions, such as authenticating or certifying contracts and other important documents.
- Receiver:** A person or company appointed by a court to manage the financial affairs of a business or person that has gone bankrupt, or to care for property in litigation.
- Refinery:** An industrial building or series of structures where a substance is refined and processed.
- Royalty:** In an oil lease, a share of the product or profit reserved by the grantor of the lease (such as the landowner).
- Texas Railroad Commission:** The state agency established in 1891 to regulate railway transportation. It later assumed regulatory control over the oil, gas, and mining industries in the state.
- Title:** Written proof of legal ownership of a property.
- Tourist Cabin:** A small wooden structure or cluster of structures which provided motorists a place to stay along well-traveled roads. They first sprung up in the 1920s and were in use until the 1950s when roadside motels finally replaced them in popularity.
- Witness Tree:** A large, healthy tree situated near the corners of a property boundary that is used by land surveyors to more accurately measure and map land.