Different Ways of Seeing Our World

Students, and for that matter all of us, have become accustomed to seeing and visualizing the nations of the world according to the standard Mercator map of the world that we all use. However, if other factors such as population or gross domestic product of a nation are considered, the relative "size" of most nations is drastically altered. In this lesson, students are given the opportunity to make world maps, with the relative size of nations dependent not on physical geography, but on population and economic strength.

Grade Level
Grade 11

Time Required
120 minutes

Curriculum Connection
Alberta: Social 20 or 23, Topic B

However, the lesson is readily applicable to other levels and provinces, all of which deal with international relations in their curriculums.

Link to Canadian National Geography Standards
Essential Element #1 (Grade 9–12) – The World in Spatial Terms
Essential Element #4 (Grade 9–12) – Human Systems

Geographic Skills: All five of the geographic skills are employed in this lesson. Students must first plan their map making, use the Canadian Geographic–CIDA map A Developing World as well as Internet sources to collect information, create a map based on the data they find, and finally analyse and assess their results.

Canadian Geographic–CIDA Map
This lesson uses the Canadian Geographic–CIDA map A Developing World. Copies of the map have been distributed to schools across Canada. To view an on-line version of the map, please go to www.canadiangeographic.ca/worldmap.

Additional Resources, Materials, and Equipment Required
Students will be divided into groups of three. Each group will need the following:

- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Calculator
Main Objective
Students will create visual images of the world’s nations, showing them in new and unexpected patterns (e.g. not based on physical size, but on relative population and economic wealth).

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- visualize the world’s nations clearly in terms of the size of their population or economy;
- relate this new ordering of the world’s nations to current issues involving international relations and the North–South interrelationship of nations.

The essential concept is that when different criteria are used to create a world map, the traditional view of the world is drastically altered. Geographic size often has little to do with a country’s population or economy.

- Students will use the maps they create to suggest a series of generalizations and observations, synthesizing the different approaches to international relationships.
- Students will also develop their spatial skills by constructing their new world maps.
### Lesson

| **Introduction** | • Either post the print maps on the walls of the classroom, or have students access the map online. Put students in groups of three and have each look make a list of the five largest nations of the world, based on area. Compare answers and write the names of the largest nations on the board.  
• Ask the students how the world map might look if countries were shown according to the size of their populations, or the size of their economies, instead of physical size.  
• Tell them that the first part of the lesson will, in fact, be to construct such maps, after which they will discuss what they discover. |
| **Lesson Development** | • Hand out two large pieces of newsprint, markers, scissors, and a number of 8.5 x 11-inch sheets of paper to each group. Each group will also need access to one of the posted maps or to the online map.  
• Write the names of 20 countries on the board. Instruct the students to make two "new" maps of the world according to the instructions in the Student Activity Sheet.  
• Once the maps are completed, have the groups hang their maps around the map A Developing World, for example, with the population map on the left and the economic map on the right of the map A Developing World. |
| **Conclusion** | • Ask the students what they learned from this exercise. This could be done through class discussion, or teachers could include a written component. |

### Lesson Extension

• Students may write down three questions that arise from this activity (e.g. three areas where they think they need more information). This is an extremely good way to lead into a unit on current world issues and international relations. Keeping the maps posted around the room for a while is a good reminder to students, as they proceed through the unit, that there are many ways of seeing the world.  
• Have the groups further explore the development themes on the website. This will help them better understand why the population and economic maps that they have created have such unusual shapes. Consider visiting the “Access to Safe Drinking Water” page, for example, on the website ([www.canadiangeographic.ca/worldmap](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/worldmap)). Print some of the themes pages and hand them out to students for group discussion. Alternatively, the students could be encouraged to visit these pages online. Help guide their discussions by preparing and providing a series of questions on each theme to be explored.

### Assessment of Student Learning

Teachers may choose to assign a mark to the maps themselves. Further, have each group write down and hand in a list of five ways that this exercise has changed the way they look at the world.
Student Activity Sheet

In order to complete your maps, follow the instructions carefully!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Member</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Use the marker to draw on each of the two large pieces of newsprint, an outline map of the world’s continents, using the map <em>A Developing World</em> as a model. These outlines do not need to be detailed, or even particularly accurate, as long as they are roughly accurate in terms of relative size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>On a sheet of paper, write the names of the 20 countries down the left side and, using the map <em>A Developing World</em>, record the population of each country, rounded to the nearest 10 million. Example: Canada—34,700,000 becomes 35 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Use the map <em>A Developing World</em> to find the gross domestic product (GDP) of each country. It will be given as “GDP per capita.” Round the value to the nearest $100.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map Creation:
Now comes the math! Note that the measurements do not have to be precise, and all numbers should be rounded.

**Population map:**
Cut a piece of 8.5 x 11-inch paper so that the size of the paper represents the population of each country. The scale is 4 cm² for every 10 million people.

For example, since Canada has a rounded population of 35 million, cut a piece of paper that is 12 square centimetres (four times three groups of 10 million). Glue this paper, labelled Canada, on the outline map of the continents where Canada should be (obviously the sizes will not match). You can vary the shape by making the piece of paper 12 cm by 1 cm, or 4 cm by 3 cm, or any other combination that equals 12 cm².

**Economic map:**
Use the statistics for GDP to create a second map. This time, have each $500 represented by 1 cm². Therefore, Canada would be about 45 cm². Glue the new country size, labelled Canada, on the second outline map of the continents. Continue with the other countries. When you have completed both maps of the world, with all the necessary elements for a map, post them in the classroom, as instructed.