

Salish Sea Studies Activity: Embodied Mapping

Western Washington University

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Map: Aquila Flower 2021 -
Salish Sea Reference Map



About this Activity

I came up with this activity while trying to think of playful ways for students to test their knowledge of the geography of the Salish Sea – and to experience in an embodied way how their mental maps are shaped by the Canada-US border. The first time I taught Intro to the Salish Sea, I invited students outside mid-quarter to a grassy area overlooking the Salish Sea on Western Washington University. I gave each of them a scrap of paper with a place name on it. I pointed out markers on the landscape to demarcate the north, south, east, and west of the Salish Sea. I told students they could talk with each other, use their phones, and consult course materials to determine where to stand on our collectively-created “map.” There was a lot of discussion, a little chaos, and some laughing, and some students still tell me years later they remember it all vividly.

Staging this Activity

- Before class, print out Salish Sea places (see below)
 - Try to get a mix of different landscape features (islands, rivers, cities)
 - Try to get a mix of Canada vs. United States places (green are Canada, orange are US but don't tell your students that)
- Find a flat place outside
- Tell your students to bring their phones and class materials with them
- Designate markers for north, south, east, and west to give a basic starting point – consider showing them the 49th parallel on the imaginary map you're all creating
- Tell students to spend 3-5 minutes looking up their place and deciding where to position themselves on the “Map”
- Once they've positioned themselves, ask them to talk with the nearest 3-5 people to triangulate their location with other places, then adjust their position accordingly
- Once everyone is confident about where they are positioned, ask students to call out their place name
- Ask the group if anyone's position needs to be adjusted
- If time permits, ask each student to share something special about their assigned place

Salish Sea Places

Valdes Island	Neah Bay	Mount Baker
Hornby Island	Puyallup	Mount Rainier
Gambier Island	Everett	Mount Garibaldi
Whidbey Island	Gibsons	Mount Tantalus
Harstine Island	Powell River	Mount Waddington
Stuart Island	Vancouver	Tsitika Peak
Anderson Island	Richmond	Victoria Peak
Fidalgo Island	Ladysmith	Mount Angeles
Camano Island	Nanaimo	Mount Constitution
Denman Island	Port Townsend	Mount Shuksan
Sucia Island	Abbotsford	Comox Lake
Quadra Island	Poulsbo	Lake Crescent
Waldron Island	Squamish	Chilliwack Lake

Vashon Island	Saanich	Lake Whatcom
Gabriola Island	Mount Vernon	Harrison Lake
Cortes Island	Redmond	Pitt Lake
Mayne Island	Blaine	Coquitlam Lake
Marrowstone Island	Sechelt	Indian Arm
Thetis Island	Kent	Sechelt Inlet
Lopez Island	Campbell River	Jervis Inlet
Prevost Island	Sequim	Lake Cushman
Salt Spring Island	Tacoma	Hood Canal
San Juan Island	Chilliwack	Totten Inlet
Galiano Island	Anacortes	Budd Inlet
Saturna Island	Friday Harbor	Lake Washington
Pender Island	Bellingham	Nooksack River

Bainbridge Island	Ganges	Baker Lake
Bowen Island	Oak Harbor	Fraser River
Orcas Island	Burnaby	Skagit River
Moresby Island	Bremerton	Nisqually River
Shaw Island	Victoria	Puyallup River
Lummi Island	Parksville	Skagit River
Penelakut Island	Federal Way	Nanaimo River
Sidney Island	Shelton	Campbell River
Texada Island	Olympia	Squamish River
Lasqueti Island	Port Angeles	Cowichan River
Yellow Island	Port Renfrew	Elwha River
Cypress Island	Duncan	Snohomish River
Vendovi Island	Surrey	Dosewallips River