



Navigating the WHG for Spatial Thinking

Rationale: Students will learn to use the World Historical Gazetteer (<https://whgazetteer.org/>). They will also use the World Historical Gazetteer to make connections between named place and cartographic space, gaining exposure to key skills of spatial thinking and reasoning. (Suitable for middle school, high school, and college students)

Part 1: Interactive tools and features of the WHG

In this section, students will learn how to navigate and interact with various features of the website.

Procedure:

1. Go to <https://whgazetteer.org/> and click on *Explore open access, historical place data*
2. Enter the name of a place in the search box [we suggest Istanbul as an example]
 - a. How many results do you see?
 - b. What place types do you see?
3. Click on a specific result
 - a. What name variants are associated with this place, and in what languages?
 - b. Are there any time periods associated with this place?
 - c. What can you discover about where this information comes from?
4. Navigate back to the home screen (<https://whgazetteer.org/>). Next to the bar that says “Featured Datasets and Collections” click “list all.” Click on a few of the datasets to explore more.
 - a. What types of sources does the information for a dataset come from?
5. Navigate back to the search screen and explore the “Place Category” filters
 - a. Find an example of a place in each category
 - b. What does this tell you about different kinds of places?

Part 2: Spatial Thinking and Reasoning

In this section, students will be prompted to use the WHG to think about space and place.

Procedure:

1. Use the WHG search to find two places that have the same name but are in different regions of the world.
 - a. Why do you think they have the same name?

An example of this is “Alexandria” after Alexander the Great founded, substantially re-established or renamed numerous towns and cities across the modern day Middle East and India.

2. Use the WHG search to find a place that has undergone a name change
 - a. When did the name change occur?
 - b. Why do you think this change occurred?

For example, try searching for Istanbul. What are the different names that it has been called over time? For more examples and exercises of place name changes in Asia, see “Exploring the Changing Names of Cities” under teaching with the WHG.

3. Search for a place. In the map window that appears with your place, turn on the optional layers (the layer button in the upper right hand corner of the map): rivers, watersheds, and ecoregions. Also click on the box that says “nearby places” to see 300 nearby places.
 - a. What can you discover about your place in relation to these environmental features?
 - b. What do the nearby places tell you about your place? Do you recognize other important cities? Is it potentially part of a network of those cities? Is it isolated? Do those cities do anything that complement or compete with your city of choice?
4. Navigate back to the home screen. Under “Featured Datasets and Collections” click on Dutch History.
 - a. What are the datasets associated with this collection?
5. Click on “Browse Data” on the Dutch History Collection (next to “Collection Summary”)
 - a. Where are there Dutch place names on the map?
 - b. Why are there so many places related to Dutch history around the world?

Part 3: Linked Open Data

In this section, students will explore how data in the WHG is linked to other information.

Procedure:

1. Navigate back to the search screen and search for Beijing, Click on the first place in the union index. Click on “Full Record” to see more about where the information about the place came from. Scroll down to the bottom to see “Dataset Details”
 - a. What is GeoNames cities?
2. Navigate to GeoNames

- a. What can you learn about Beijing from this website?
3. Navigate back to the record for Beijing and look at Traces under the map feature
 - a. What related persons, events, works or objects are related to Beijing?
 - b. Click on the links. What can they tell you about Beijing?