



Smithsonian

Making Maps



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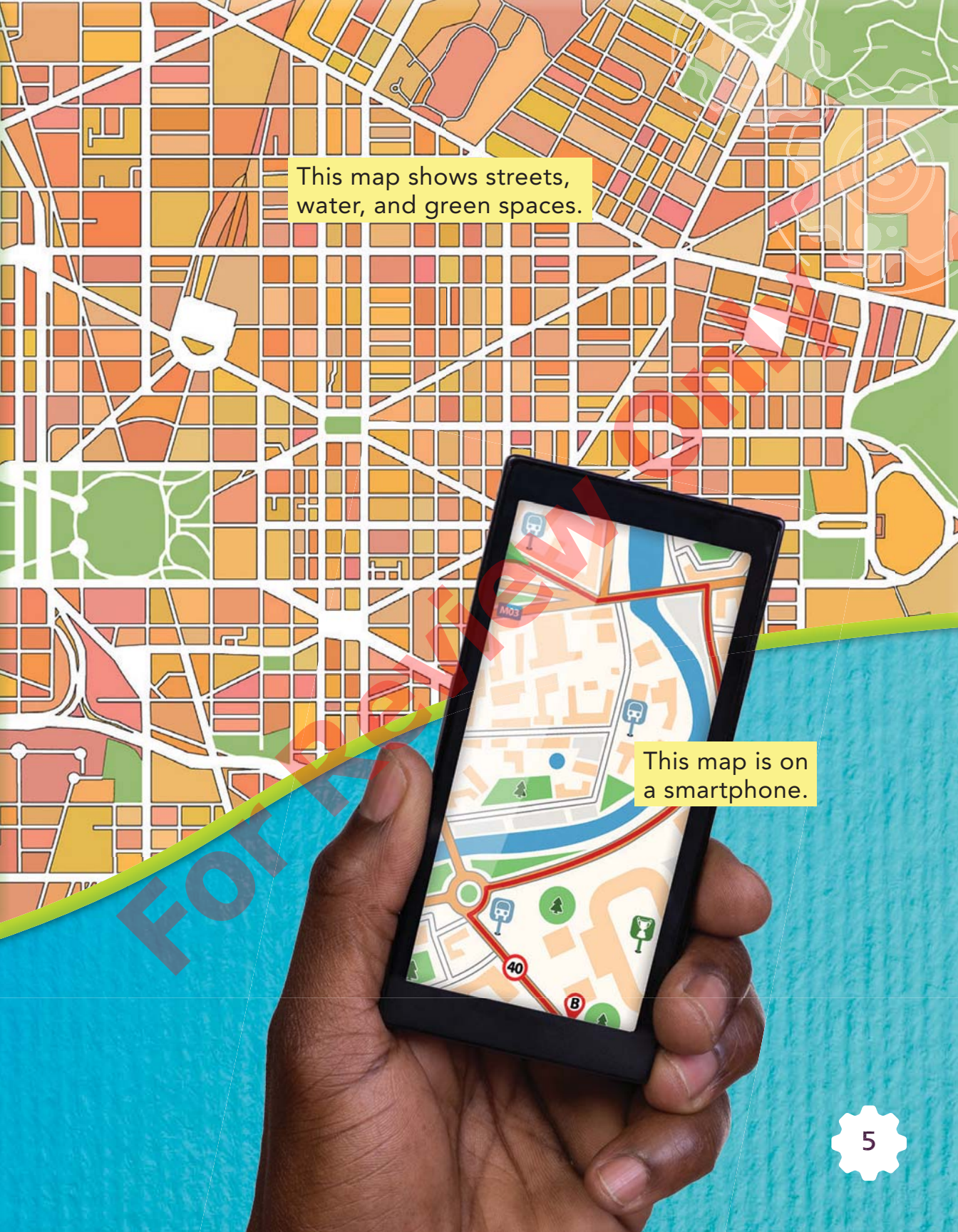
Mighty Maps

Maps tell people which way to turn. They tell ambulance drivers how to find people who need help. Maps can help people save lives.

Maps have been around a long time. They have changed a lot since they were first made. Maps today are small enough to fit in a person's pocket—but they are a big deal.



This map is on a smartwatch.



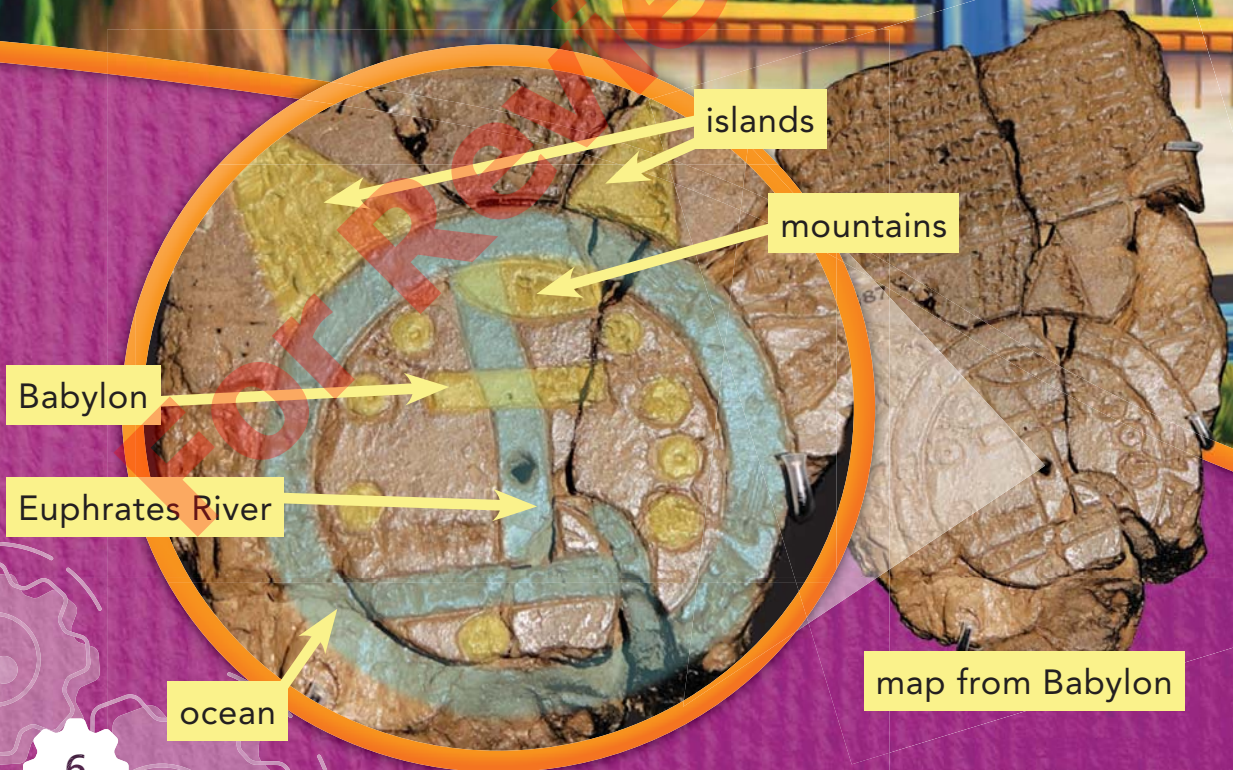
This map shows streets, water, and green spaces.

This map is on a smartphone.

The First Maps

No one knows when the first map was made. It was probably just lines scratched in dirt.

One of the oldest maps that still survives is made from clay. It was created in Babylon, a city from long ago. The map does not have a lot of details. Some places on the map are still around. Some places are not.





This painting shows what the entrance to Babylon might have looked like.

For many years, there were not a lot of maps. Maps had to be drawn by hand. Most were not very **accurate**.

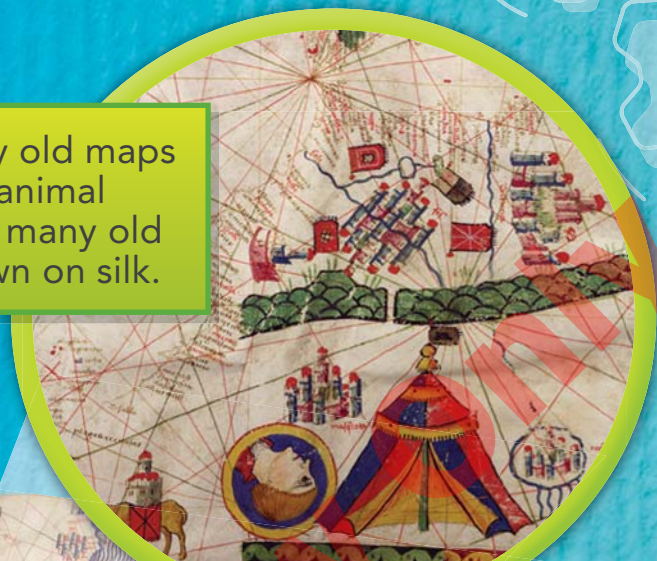
Maps cost a lot of money to make. They cost a lot of money to buy too. Only rich people could afford maps.

About five hundred years ago, people learned how to print maps. Maps became cheaper to make. They also became more common.

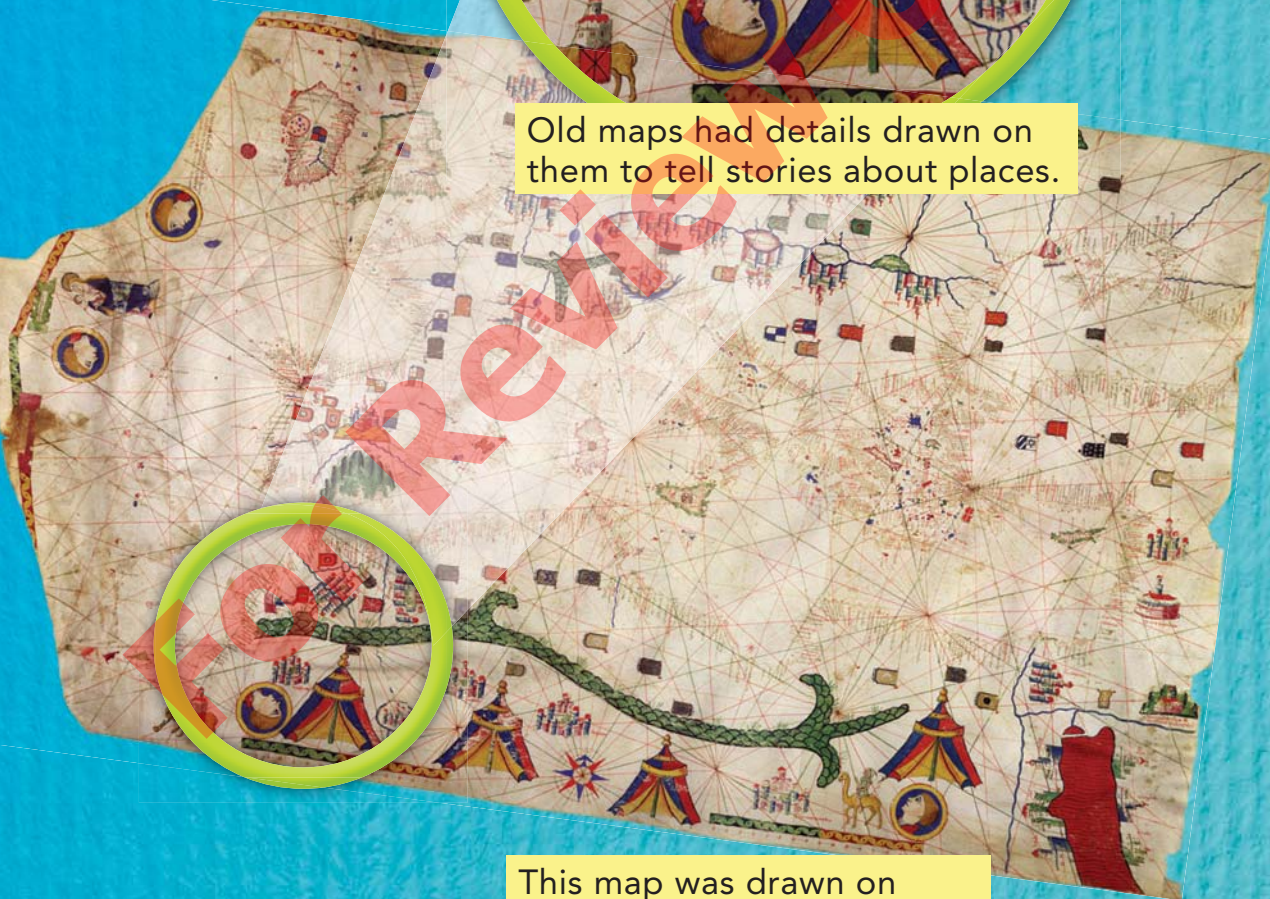
This map of the world was hand-drawn in 1633.



In Europe, many old maps were drawn on animal skins. In China, many old maps were drawn on silk.



Old maps had details drawn on them to tell stories about places.



This map was drawn on animal skin in Spain in 1466.



STEAM CHALLENGE

Define the Problem

A new student just joined your class. Your teacher has asked you to create a school map for the student.



Constraints: Your map must be drawn from a bird's-eye view. You must include color in your map.



Criteria: Your map must have a map legend, a compass rose, and drawings of important places at your school. It should be clear and easy to use.



Research and Brainstorm

How do maps help people get around? What will different colors mean on your map? What are the important places at your school? Where are they located?



Design and Build

Decide what you will include in your map legend. Then, sketch your school as though you were looking from above. Draw and color your map.



Test and Improve

Share your map with your friends. Ask them to find a place on your map. Did they find it easily? Is your map clear? How can you improve your map? Improve your map and present it again.



Reflect and Share

Could a new student read and understand your map? How can you make your map easier to follow?