



# Mapping the Mediterranean: Lesson Plan

A Road map for the Roman Empire, ca. 250 CE

A Classroom Activity

**Subject Area:** World History

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**For Grade Levels:** 9 - 12

**NCSS Standards:** I, II, III

**Time Required:** One to two class periods

**Objectives:** The Roman Empire at its height has been celebrated for the peace and prosperity it brought to the Mediterranean region and lands beyond. This lesson focuses on a copy of a map dating from about 250 CE, which shows how Roman roads connected all parts of the empire with its center at Rome. Students will consider the importance of transportation and communication in building and sustaining an empire, use a primary source map to visualize the Roman Empire, and develop an understanding of the phrase, "All roads lead to Rome."

Students will:

1. Consider how empires are created and sustained.
2. Study the Peutinger Table as a whole and in detail as a tool of empire for Rome, c. 250 CE.

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Mapping the Mediterranean, a map inventory and online exhibition, is located at [http://www.aiys.org/aodl/public/medmaps/MEDMAPS\\_site/MM\\_pages/index.htm](http://www.aiys.org/aodl/public/medmaps/MEDMAPS_site/MM_pages/index.htm).

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3. Extend their familiarity with maps to include an ancient time-distance travel chart that synthesizes a series of strip maps.
4. Gain an appreciation for the nature and value of primary source materials.
5. Practice map-reading skills.

**Materials:**

Download a copy of “Peutingeriana tabula itineraria, segmentum II, segmentum IV” from:

[http://www.aiys.org/aodl/public/medmaps/MEDMAPS\\_site/Essay\\_pages/Peutinger.htm](http://www.aiys.org/aodl/public/medmaps/MEDMAPS_site/Essay_pages/Peutinger.htm)

**Procedure:**

1. Whole class discussion: How are empires created and sustained?
2. Refer to World Studies textbook to apply the general question to the Roman experience in the third century, CE.
3. Handout copies of MEDMAP 4 (this may be obtained by contacting the [DLIR Project Coordinator](#)) and a classroom set of the 12 extant segments of the Peutinger Table.
  - a) Put together the 12 extant sections of the Peutinger Table plus 14” space for the missing Atlantic segment (teacher will need a surface 15 feet by 3 feet to put together the whole piece.)
  - b) Explain that this is a table not a map, but that it is put together to resemble a map of the Roman Empire. Then locate Rome, the Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic Sea, England, the Nile Delta, the Black Sea, Cyprus, Jerusalem, Mesopotamia, the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka Taprobane)
  - c) Use a blank piece of paper to sketch out the missing first segment that probably showed the British Isles, the Iberian Peninsula, the Strait of Gibraltar and Morocco’s Atlantic Coast.
  - d) Explain that the Roman roads (and the Empire) ended in segment 10 and that the table was probably a compilation of individual strip maps that traced individual routes and broke them into segments between major stops and suggested the distance or time to travel between them.

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4. Use the [Peutinger Table](#) to make copies of segment II of the Peutinger Table for each student. An 11 x 17 sheet works best, with ample margins for notes.

a) Using a color pencil or pen, have students label Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, the North Sea, Great Britain, the Rhine River (at top), Rhone River (far right, with three branches at its mouth), and the Pyrene Mountains (middle Left).

b) Trace the route from Bordeaux (Burbegalo, middle of the map at far left) to Narbonne (Harbone), the Mediterranean port at the center of the map.

c) Trace the same route on a modern map of France. Explain how the scroll format of the original papyrus “flattened” and elongated the original map.

5. Closure. Ovid, the Roman poet, claimed that “the extent of Rome’s city is the same as that of the world.” Ask each student to write a sentence or paragraph explaining what Ovid meant by that phrase. In composing their answer, students should refer to this map.

6. Extension. Trace another route on segment VI (needs link), this time starting at the mouth of the Rhone River intending to reach the mouth of the Rhine River. Note that there is no direct way. After selecting a route, use a copy of an outline map of Europe to show the journey on a modern map.