

Israel/Palestine through Maps: An Exploration of Narratives

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SUMMARY: In this session we will use examples of Israeli and Palestinian maps to explore and compare how national narratives are captured. As we listen to the stories these different maps tell, we will discover new ways to engage campers, counselors, and staff in a pluralistic approach to discussing Israel and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

GOALS: Participants will feel intellectually challenged and be able to identify multiple narratives around Israel/Palestine and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

AUDIENCE: Older campers/staff/counselors

TIMING: 75 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Pens (1/person)
- Paper
- Worksheet (1/person) included at the end of this document
- Series of maps ([link](#)) (1 copy each, printed color 11x17)
- Big Post-It paper
- Markers

SET-UP: Chairs in a circle (can also do big open space... you will need a space indoors so that the papers don't fly away).

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – *Introductions, setting group norms*
- 00:05-00:15 – *Drawing a map of your camp*
- 00:15-00:25 – *Discussion of Camp Maps*
- 00:25-00:40 – *What is a Map?*
- 00:40-00:55 – *Exploration of different maps*
- 00:55-1:10 – *Debrief*
- 1:10-1:15 – *Closing*

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:05 – Introductions, setting group norms

The session leader introduces the session topic and leads the group in a round of introductions (name, pronouns, camp, favorite spot at camp). The group creates a group brit & sets group norms. Since this is about a charged topic, it is important to include norms around experiencing/honoring difference and listening.

00:05-00:15 – Drawing a map of your camp

Each participant has 5 min to draw a map of their camp. Participants should be provided with a pen and paper. The following 5 min should be used for participants to pair up with 1 or 2 other people to share their maps and notice the similarities and differences.

00:15-00:25 – Discussion of Camp Maps

The session leader facilitates a group dialogue using the following prompts and reading the room:

- Can someone walk us through their map with the rest of the group (take 3 examples)?
- What do you notice as similarities/differences of the maps?
- Are any of these maps “more true” than the others? Why/why not?
- Why do you think we started with an activity like this? What is the point before we get into maps of Israel/Palestine?

00:25-00:40 – What is a Map?

The session leader sparks group discussion about maps more broadly, taking notes on a “post it *gado!*” in front of the room so that you all can refer back to this later. Use the following prompts and get 3-4 answers for each:

- What is a map?
- Why do we have them? // What are they used for?
- What is included in a map and why?
- Do you think a map is more of a story or more fact? Why?

00:40-00:55 – Exploration of different maps

The session leader breaks participants up into groups of 2-4. Each group has one map of Israel/Palestine. They are tasked with doing a “text study” of the map, seeking to answer the following questions (which can be written on a big paper or handed out as a worksheet):

- What do you notice? What is highlighted on this map?
- What is emphasized in this map? Is there anything surprising?
- Who do you imagine made this map? Who do you think they made it for?
- If you could ask the map maker one question, what would it be?
- Imagine this map was at a Story Slam - what story would it tell?

Participants should come back to the group prepared to tell the “story” of the map (i.e., they will introduce the map by speaking as the map... “I am a map who...”).

00:55-1:10 – Debrief

The session leader facilitates a group debrief by asking each group to introduce their map by telling the story of their map. As all maps are positioned next to each other, ask for reflections on similarities and differences. You can use the following prompts as guides:

- What do you notice?
- What do you think these map makers would agree on? What do you think they would disagree on?
- What questions have these maps raised for you?
- Which of these maps feels most familiar to you? Do any make you feel uncomfortable?
- What map most closely represents the map you have at your own camp?
- Which maps most closely match the way you drew the map of your own camp?

1:10-1:15 – Closing

Close with an excerpt from Allen Carrol (father of Story Maps)

When I began my career, “map” was a noun. Maps used to sit, mute and static, alongside narratives. Readers of paper documents might encounter several maps scattered throughout a text, or they might flip back and forth between a narrative and a map printed onto the endpapers of a book. The flipping and referring was often tedious; as a result, most readers likely gave up on the map or maps sooner or later, and just read on. The map was valuable as an accompaniment, and also as an artifact. It captured a moment in time, or the sum of understanding up to that moment. But its utility was limited the instant it was sent to the presses. While the world marched on, the map remained a captive of the moment it was created. Today, “map” is an active verb. Maps now take a much more active role in storytelling. They convey information, provide context, reveal interrelationships, show temporal change, and, present continually-updated information, or moving as a reader scrolls through a story.

Source: Allen Carrol, National Geographic Cartographer

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

If you want to make this program more clearly about identity and connection to Israel, you can trade out some of the discussion questions to instead create a gallery walk where participants mark (with sticky notes) the maps that feel most resonant/comfortable for them and then open a discussion about how/why those maps feel more comfortable for them.

Exploring Maps of Israel/Palestine
Cohen Fisher

What do you notice? What is highlighted/emphasized on this map? Is anything surprising?

Who do you imagine made this map? Who do you think they made it for?

If you could ask the map maker one question, what would it be?

Imagine this map was at a Story Slam - what story would it tell? (Be prepared to share with the group)