

# History

This week, instead of being presented with a lecture on the history of medieval England, you will be looking at history from another perspective – that of the medieval mapmaker. It was uncommon, in medieval times, for the average man to access a map. While many were educated in their faith and in the complex works of their trades, and were often fluent in multiple languages, they did not learn to read and write. Further, ink at the time was precious, and paper was difficult to make and expensive. These considerations, accompanied by the fact that hand-drawing a map took considerable time, meant that maps were not a common commodity in the Middle Ages.

When a new copy of a map *was* needed, it was desirable to find a way to accomplish the task with as little extra work as possible. The best cartographers would spend months or years creating maps, which were completed in extraordinary detail and could truly be called works of art. Unfortunately, most noblemen and monasteries did not have access to master cartographers on a regular basis. To make up for the lack of time and skill, techniques were created to make copies of the precisely detailed maps quickly and relatively easily.

This week we will be learning and employing one of those techniques. You will take the map below (showing “UNITED KINGDOM and FRANCE” and create a replica – playing close attention to detail. Every river and the minute details of the coastline and borders should be preserved. You will do this using the tracing paper which was included in your take-home packets.

Below is a list of instructions. Be sure to follow them as written, or your project will not turn out correctly:

1. Place the tracing paper over the map. Secure it in place – the best way to do this would be with paper clips. ***Do not use tape – it will almost certainly tear the tracing paper when you try to remove it.***
2. Trace the map carefully in pencil. Make sure you include every detail. This part of your work is essential and should be done slowly – if you are not very careful and detailed now, you cannot correct it in later steps.
3. Once you have completely traced your map, take the graphite carbon paper that was included in your packet. (It is the sheet of thin black paper which was behind your tracing paper.) Place this carbon paper – darker side facing down – over a blank sheet of paper, either from your art sketchbook or a piece of printer paper.
4. Place the tracing paper with the completely traced map onto the carbon paper. Secure all three sheets of paper together so that they do not shift. If your paper shifts during tracing, it can make the map unreadable.

***(To recap, that means you have a piece of blank paper on the bottom, then the piece of carbon paper, then the filled-out tracing paper on top. All of these should be secured together.)***

5. Trace over the lines you created on your tracing paper again. This time, push down when you trace over the lines. When you do this, it allows the graphite from the carbon paper to transfer onto the blank sheet of paper below. Thus, the image on the tracing paper is transferred onto the blank sheet of paper.

You now have a new map! Congratulations! Now that your map has been carefully transferred to a new piece of paper, you can fill in the details that you did not include on your tracing, such as the names of rivers, seas, channels, and oceans.

Now we will add something important. You may have noticed that you were given a map of modern-day England and France to trace. Now you will take the maps you have been given of England and France during the time of Henry II Plantagenet, and add the borders of the English and French kingdoms as they were seen in that time. Now you should add the names of the major cities from that time. You will notice that many of the cities have the same names today, and are still important cities.

Once you have labelled the map correctly, you should color in the map. This is essential to clarify which lands belong to which country, but it is also an artistic exercise. Choose colors which have traditionally been used in maps – think of the large world map in the classroom. (Neon or overly vibrant colors will not be accepted.) You may also choose, at this point, to include artistic details, such as drawing in trees around Sherwood Forest, or drawing a sea monster in the waters with the words “Here there be monsters”. Such details were common in the days of hand-drawn maps, and can greatly add to their character if done tastefully.

