World Historical Gazetteer

Navigating the World Historical Gazetteer

Rationale: This exercise is designed to show students how to navigate the World Historical Gazetteer (https://whgazetteer.org/). Students will use the World Historical Gazetteer to make connections between named place and cartographic space using key skills of spatial thinking and reasoning. Each step contains questions to consider as you complete the action.

Part 1: Interactive tools and features of the WHG

In this section, you 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 Istanbul in the search box. Each result is a hit from the WHG's "union index." The union index is made up of place names added from different datasets made by researchers.
   a. How many results do you see?
   b. What place types do you see?

3. Click on the first result for Istanbul. This brings you to a screen that lists five different attestations or entries for that place. If you click the top right corner of each attestation where it says "pid" and then a number, it will expand to provide more information like name variants, type of place and in some cases a timeline indicating when that place was called that name. Under dataset details, you will find out which dataset this place comes from. Explore all five attestations.
   a. What name variants are associated with this place, and in what languages?
   b. Are there any time periods associated with the attestations?
      i. Notice pid 83140 is called Constantinople. When you click on it, it has a timeline which indicates the times when this place was called that name.
   c. What can you discover about where this information comes from?

4. Zoom in closer to Istanbul using the map on the right of the screen. Notice that there are three different point locations. Click on nearby places in the top right corner of the map.
   a. Why might there by three different point locations?
   b. Explore some of the nearby places.

5. 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. The "dataset summary" provides metadata on the dataset and "browse" displays a map of all the places in the dataset.
    a. What types of sources does the information for a dataset come from? Information in the "Dataset Summary" will help answer this.
    b. What are some places that are geographically represented in the datasets you explored?

6. Navigate back to the search screen and explore the "Place Category" filters
    a. Find an example of a place in two different categories.
    b. What does this tell you about different kinds of places?

Part 2: Spatial Thinking and Reasoning

In this section, you 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 any place and select one of the results in the union index. 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 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 places? Is it potentially part of a network of those places? Is it isolated? Do those places do anything that complement or compete with your place of choice?

4. Navigate back to the home screen. Under "Featured Datasets and Collections" click on Dutch Global History.
    a. What are the datasets associated with this collection?
5. Click on "Browse" 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, you will explore how data in the WHG is linked to other information.

Procedure:
1. Navigate back to the search screen and search for "Fortunatae Insulae." Scroll down and click on the entry titled "Fortunatae Insulae" (Madeira Islands)". Click on the "pid" number in the right corner of the attestation to see more about where the information about the place came from. Scroll down to the bottom to see "Dataset Details"
    a. What is the Pleiades (partial) dataset?
    b. What is Pleiades?

2. Navigate to Pleiades
    a. What can you learn about "Fortunatae Insulae? (Madeira Islands)" from this website?

3. Navigate back to the record for "Fortunatae Insulae? (Madeira Islands)" and look at "In Collections" under the map feature. Click on the link for the associated collection "The World of Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa), 1745-1797." The collection is a list of places that Olauduh Equiano visited during his lifetime. Through a collection, seemingly disparate places are linked together. The places he traveled can be seen as points on the map and in a list. Navigate to page two of the list to see Fortunatae Insulae.
    a. What can you learn about "Fortunatae Insulae? (Madeira Islands)" from the collection?
    b. What other places did Equiano travel to in his life?
    c. What can you learn about those places?