WHERE WE LIVE

★★ Grades 7-8

Skills and Objectives:

● Students will practice reading special purpose maps.
● Students will analyze population density and population shifts.

Suggested Groupings:

Small groups, individuals

Getting Started:

1. Begin this lesson by telling students they will practice reading two kinds of special purpose maps: a Mean Center of Population map (on page 8 of this guide) and a Population Density map (inset in the We Count! wall map).

● A Mean Center of Population map is a useful tool in assessing population shifts. Reasons for these shifts include historical movements, such as westward expansion, as well as economic trends.

● The Population Density map shows where people in the U.S. live, county by county. Students can use the map key to determine how densely populated particular counties are.

2. To help students understand what the mean center of population is, try this demonstration:

● Tape 3 paper clips on each end of a letter-size envelope. Balance the envelope on your fingertip. Demonstrate the balance point to the class.

● Then move 2 paper clips from one side of the envelope to the other, so that one side has 5 clips and the other has one. Demonstrate how the balance point shifts.

● Explain that the mean center of population is the point at which the United States would balance perfectly if it were a flat surface (like the envelope) and every person weighed the same amount (as the paper clips do).

● Be sure students know which area of the U.S. the map on page 8 shows. Have them match the states on this map with the same states on the We Count! wall map.

Using the Activity Worksheets:

● Photocopy the Lesson 2 Activity Worksheets (pages 7 and 8) for your class. Distribute the worksheets to your students and introduce them to the activities they will do.

Wrapping Up:

● Go over students' answers to the questions on worksheet pages 7 and 8.

● According to the 1990 Census, the Sunbelt region (Southern and Southwestern states) had the largest population increase. Help students see that the center of population is shifting south and west in accordance with the population increase.

● Northeastern states have the highest population density. Help students see the correlation between this fact and how the region appears on the Population Density map.

● Have students refer to their school library's almanac or *The Statistical Abstract of the United States* to compare the population density of the U.S. to that of other countries. *(In 1990, the U.S. population density was 70 people per square mile. Australia had 6 people per square mile, and Japan had 849 per square mile.)* Next, have them compare the population densities of the U.S. states as well.
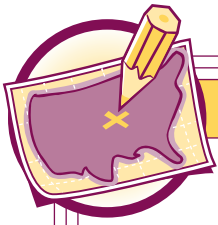
Answers:

Page 7:

1. 250 or more people per square mile. **2.** New Jersey and Rhode Island. (New Jersey is actually the most densely populated state.) **3.** Answers will vary. **4.** The Northeast. **5.** Possible answer: The Eastern half of the country is more densely populated than the Western half.

Page 8:

1. Maryland, Indiana, Missouri. **2.** 1830 to 1840. **3.** West and south. **4.** More people are moving to the South and West.

Name: _____

Where **We Live**

🔮 A lot of the information the census collects is shown on **special purpose maps.** Special purpose maps are maps that show information about a specific subject, such as a country's annual rainfall or milk consumption. Two special purpose maps the U.S. Census Bureau uses are a **Population Density** map and a **Mean Center of Population** map.

Population Density Map

The We Count! wall map shows the population totals for each state. But, the Population Density map shows how that population is distributed in each state. Look at the Population Density map (in a separate box on the We Count! wall map.) This map shows the population density, or how many people there are per square mile for each county in the United States. Different densities are shown as different colors. The map key tells you what each color represents. Use this map to answer the following questions.

1. How many people per square mile do the red counties have? _____

_____

2. Which two states appear to be the most densely populated? _____

3. Look at your state. What is the population density of the most densely populated part?

_____

What is the population density of the least densely populated part? _____

4. Which region of the country seems most densely populated: the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, or the West? _____

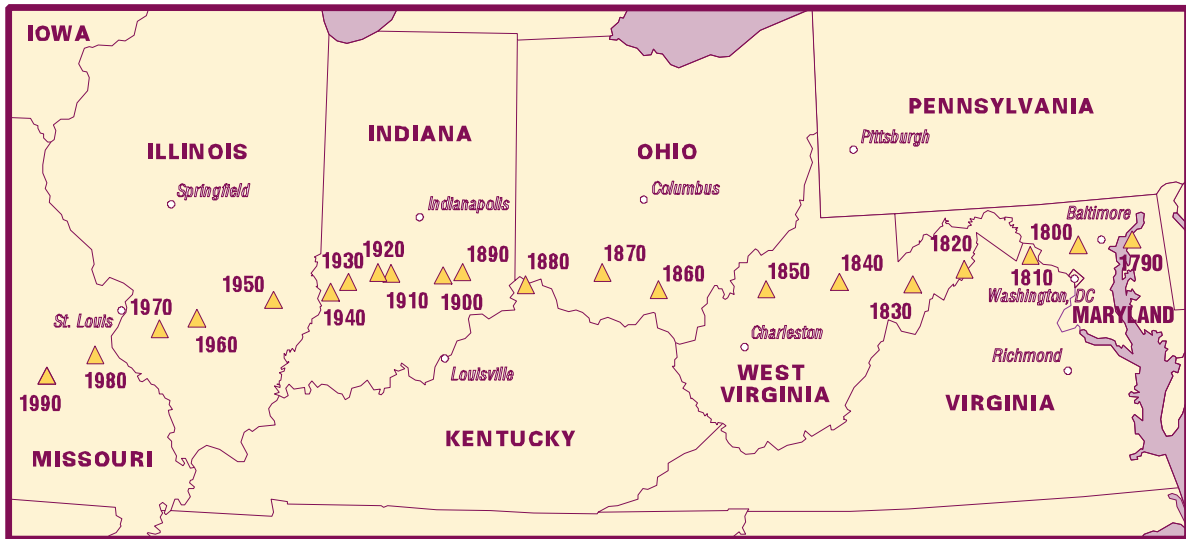**5.** What is one conclusion you can draw from this map? _____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____

Where **We Live** (continued)

Mean Center of Population

As the U.S. has grown from 13 to 50 states, the number of people living in different parts of the country has also changed. The **Mean Center of Population** map shows the point at which the country would balance perfectly if it were a flat surface and every person on it were of equal weight.

Mean Center of Population

Look at the Mean Center of Population map above. Use it to answer the questions below.

1. In what state was the center of population located in 1790?_____

in 1890? _____ in 1990? _____

2. Which decade had a larger population shift: 1830 to 1840, or 1960 to 1970?_____

3. In which two directions has the center of population shifted since 1790?

_____

4. What do you think this shift means? _____

_____