

Potato Topo

3-5

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Objectives:

- To understand that topographic maps represent three dimensions.
- To gain more experience with maps.
- To practice using scale.

Materials:

- Potato
- Knife
- Pencil
- paper

Procedure:

1. Each group gets half of a potato
2. One person cuts the potato into 1/2 inch slices
3. After each slice is cut another person takes the slice and draws its outline on a piece of paper (start with the largest piece)
4. Remove the first slice and place the second slice inside the line of the first.
5. Draw a line around the inside slice.
6. Repeat with every slice.

When all slices have been cut and traced, pile up the potato slices to one side of the topo potato and see how the lines on the paper represent the dimensions of the

potato. Discuss the contour interval (1/2in) and how this would pertain to topo maps and larger features on earth.

Questions:

- What types of things could be represented this way?
- What would happen if you changed the scale?
- What sorts of uses would these maps have?

Extension:

1. Have the students label each line with an appropriate scale. For example, 1/2 inches represents 20 feet.
2. Have them look at a real topographic map and find the mountains and valleys.
3. Have them look at a topo map of their area and identify key features.