A HISTORY OF THE CENSUS

★ Grades 5-6

Skills and Objectives:

● Students will compare historical maps.
● Students will draw conclusions from maps.

Suggested Groupings:
Small groups, individuals

Getting Started:
● Hand out copies of the reproducible on page 4. Have students read and compare the 1790 and 1890 census maps with each other, and with the We Count! wall map.

● Explain that the first U.S. census, in 1790, yielded a population count of approximately 4 million; but by 1890, that number had grown to approximately 63 million; and by 1990, that number had reached approximately 248 million. Contributing factors include high levels of immigration, high birth rates, and longer life spans.

● **What do you know about the United States in the 1790s?** *(Possible answers: it had many fewer states; the Revolutionary War had just ended; slavery still existed.)* **In the 1890s?** *(The Spanish-American War took place; slavery had been abolished.)* **In the 1990s?** *(The Cold War ended; the U.S. fought the Gulf War; many new technologies, including the Internet, were developed.)*

Using the Activity Worksheet:
Distribute copies of the Lesson 1 Activity Worksheet (page 5) to your class and introduce them to the activity. Inform them that they will need to refer to the 1790 and 1890 census maps (page 4) and the We Count! wall map to complete this activity.

Wrapping Up:
● Review students' completed charts and their answers to the Worksheet questions (page 5).

● **How does the U.S. population in 1890 compare with the population in 1990 (on the We Count! wall map)?** *(Possible answer: California has grown to become the most populous state.)*

Chalkboard Definitions

census: an official count of all the people living in the country.

historical map: a map that provides information about the past.

● **Why might the government need to know about population changes?** *(Possible answers: to know how many representatives each state gets; to provide the right services to everyone.)*

● Explain that while the overall population may have increased between 1790 and 1890, the American Indian population declined. Have students connect the information on the American Indian Reservation map (on the We Count! wall map) with what they know about the history of American Indians. For instance, students can research changes among the American Indian population during those years. What are some of the factors that contributed to these changes?

● Students might enjoy finding out about censuses in other countries or cultures. For activities using *quipus*, knotted strings the Inca (an ancient South American people) used to record census-style data, see *Multicultural Math: Hands-on Activities from Around the World* by Claudia Zaslavsky (Scholastic, 1994).

Answers:
Page 5: 1. VT, NH, NY, MA, CT, RI, PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA. **2.** 100,000–349,999; 2,000,000 or more; 17,990,500. **3.** Students should realize immigration played a large part in the U.S. population increase.

	1790	1890	1990
TOTAL U.S. POPULATION	3,909,214	62,979,766	248, 709, 873
NUMBER OF STATES included in census	13	45	50
AREAS INCLUDED IN CENSUS that had not yet become states (use abbreviations)	TN	UT, AZ, NM, AK	

A History of the **Census**

Results of the 1790 Census

NH
VT
MA
NY
RI
CT
PA
NJ
DE
MD
VA
NC
TN**
SC
GA

MAP KEY

Number of Persons

350,000 or more
100,000 - 349,999
Less than 100,000
Areas not included
in 1790 Census

United States Total
3,909,214

* Part of Massachusetts
in 1790

** Not a state until 1796

Results of the 1890 Census

AK***

WA
OR
MT
ND
MN
NH
VT
ME
ID
SD
WI
MA
WY
NY
RI
NV
IA
MI
CT
UT*
NE
IL
IN
OH
PA
NJ
CA
CO
KS
MO
KY
WV
VA
DE
MD
DC
AZ**
NM**
OK
AR
TN
NC
MS
AL
GA
SC
TX
LA
FL

HI***

MAP KEY

Number of Persons

2,000,000 or more
500,000 - 1,999,999
Less than 500,000
Areas not included
in 1890 Census

United States Total
62,979,766

* Not a state until 1896

** Not a state until 1912

*** Not a state until 1959

Name: _____

A History of the **Census** (continued)

Look at the two **historical maps** on the previous page and the We Count! wall map. The top map shows information taken from the 1790 Census. (That's the first year a census was taken.) The bottom map shows information from the 1890 Census. The We Count! wall map shows information from the 1990 Census. By comparing these three maps, you can get some ideas about how the United States changed during these 200 years. **Use the three maps to fill in the chart below.**

	1790	**1890**	**1990**
TOTAL U.S. POPULATION	_____	_____	_____
NUMBER OF STATES included in census	_____	_____	_____
AREAS INCLUDED IN CENSUS that had not yet become states (use abbreviations)	_____ _____	_____ _____	_____ _____

Now use the maps to answer these questions:

1. List the states that appear on both the 1790 and 1890 maps.

_____

_____

2. How many people lived in New York in 1790? _____

In 1890? _____ In 1990? _____

3. What might be some causes of the growth in U.S. population between 1790 and 1990?

_____

_____

_____