



# We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Escape from Papago Park, Phoenix, Arizona

**Author** John Halverson  
**Grade Level** High School  
**Duration** 2 class periods

## National Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#### Element 2: Places and Regions

6. How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.

#### Element 6: The Uses of Geography

17. How to apply geography to interpret the past

## AZ Standards

### ELA

#### Reading Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

11-12 RI.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in print in order to address a question or solve a problem.

#### Writing Production and Distribution of Writing

11-12.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## Other Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### The use of geographic representations and tools help individuals understand their world.

HS.G1.1 Use geographic data to explain and analyze relationships between locations of place and regions. Key tools and representations such as maps, remotely sensed and other images, tables, and graphs

### HISTORY

#### Cycles of conflict and cooperation have shaped relations among people, places, and environments.

HS.H2.1 Explain multiple causes of conflict.  
HS.H2.2 Analyze approaches to conflict management and resolution.  
HS.H2.3 Evaluate the short- and long- term impacts of conflicts and their resolutions.

## Overview

Maps skills are essential to our understanding of the world around us. Maps are essential items often is the resolution and management of conflict. Maps (ownership of territory) can also be the cause of conflict. And students remember history through good stories. This lesson provides one of those good stories.

## Purpose

In this lesson, students will learn about one example of how geography is a strong factor in historical

events. This lesson includes a great story about how World War II German prisoners of war (POWs) were housed at Papago Park in Phoenix, Arizona. And how maps influenced the escape attempt made by prisoners.

## Materials

- Group Activity: Directions and Devices—How Do We Escape?
- Background Information
- Arizona's Landforms and Rivers Map  
<https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZTOPO.PDF>
- Physical and Cultural Map Route Analysis Sheet

- Major Arizona Railroads and Roads (circa 1940) [https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/RR\\_1940.pdf](https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/RR_1940.pdf)
- Transportation Map Route Analysis Sheet
- Writing Prompt and Essay Grading Criteria
- The Actual Escape from Papago Park
- PowerPoint of maps and images
- Projector and computer

## Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Examine maps and solve a problem.
2. Examine historical documents about one of Arizona's roles in World War II.
3. Discuss how maps form our perception of a place.

## Procedures

*Prerequisite Knowledge: Students have been studying World War II.*

### SESSION ONE

1. Group Activity. Distribute the Directions and Devices--How Do We Escape? worksheet. In small groups, have the students brainstorm what means of transportation they might use to escape from a POW camp and what types of things they may want for their escape. Discuss some of the ideas brainstormed.
2. Read the Background Information to the students as a whole group. Answer any pertinent questions. Tell them they will be looking to escape from Phoenix.
3. Individual or Group Work: Hand out the Arizona Landforms and Rivers Map <https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZTOPO.PDF> and explain to the students that they are being held captive in 1940 in Phoenix and they need to plan an escape route to enable them to return to Germany. Distribute the Physical and Cultural Map Route Analysis Sheet.
4. Allow the students sufficient time to complete the previous worksheet and then hand out the Major Arizona Railroads and Roads (circa 1940) map. [https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/RR\\_1940.pdf](https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/RR_1940.pdf)
5. Distribute the Transportation Map Route Analysis Sheet. Have students finish as homework if necessary.

### SESSION TWO

6. Distribute the writing prompt: We Gotta get Out of This Place, Escape from Papago Park. Read the instructions as a group and have the students use their analysis sheets to determine a route of escape, advantages to their route, what they will take with them and a prediction for success. This may be done in small groups or as individuals. This may be done as a completion project for a second session or as a homework assignment dependent upon the individual classroom
7. Closure for this activity will be the sharing of The Actual Escape from Papago Park. Show the PowerPoint of the images. Seek student feedback as to their reactions to what really happened. Discuss how maps can form our perception of places. Discuss how maps can be the cause of conflict and help in the management and resolution of conflict.

## Assessment

### Social Science

Students can be graded for geography and history concepts by completing the Physical and Cultural Map Route Analysis Sheet and the Transportation Map Route Analysis Sheet. Mastery will be considered 90% of the worksheet is completed with plausible ideas.

### ELA

The resulting essay can be graded with the rubric provided. A score of 3 or higher will be considered mastery in each category.

## Extensions

Have students look for other "great stories" concerning WWII and the use of maps. Have them research and share their stories with others electronically or in class.

Other information:

<https://azlibrary.gov/dazl/learners/research-topics/world-war-ii-prisoner-war-camps>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Papago\\_Escape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Papago_Escape)  
<https://www.azcentral.com/story/travel/2015/12/17/wii-pows-escape-papago-park-arizona-military-history/77174834/>

