

WILDERLAND LEARNING TRAILS

Map the Wilderland

One shared story - three age levels - one family roundtable

StoryKeepers Press | 2026

Trail 1 • Map the Wilderland

Geography • Cartography • Scale • Spatial Reasoning • Journey Planning

Story connection: The Wilderland map is not decoration. The Mingles' choices are shaped by distance, direction, water, terrain, settlement, and danger. This trail turns the map into a working geographic document.

Wilderland map (printed or on screen)

Pencil

Ruler

Optional: colored pencils or transparent sheet for overlays

TRAIL 1 • MAP THE WILDERLAND

Upper Elementary • Grades 4-5

Learning goals

Use a compass rose, legend and scale.

Identify physical and human features on a map.

Estimate distance and choose a route for a stated reason.

Explain a route choice using at least two map details.

Student Challenge • Map Detective

1. Find and label five different kinds of features on the Wilderland map: a settlement, a body of water, a landform, a route or boundary, and a threatened place.
2. Write four direction statements using north, south, east or west. Example: "The Evenplain is ___ of Havenbrook."
3. Use the map scale to estimate the distance between two places named in the story. Show the ruler measurement and your estimate.
4. Choose a destination. Draw two possible routes to it. Circle the route you would take and explain two reasons why.
5. Create one new map symbol for a feature the Mingles would care about. Add it to a mini legend.

Make it yours

Create a postcard-sized "traveler's map" of a place you know well - your neighborhood, a park, a farm, or a campground. It must include a title, compass rose, at least five symbols, a legend, and one route from Point A to Point B.

Parent notes

The child can explain what a map symbol represents.

Distance estimates are reasonable even if not exact.

Route choice refers to visible evidence such as water, terrain, distance or settlement.

Do not over-correct drawing quality; the goal is spatial thinking, not art.

TRAIL 1 • MAP THE WILDERLAND

Middle School • Grades 6-8

Learning goals

Use scale to estimate distance and travel time.

Compare routes using multiple constraints.

Use quantitative and geographic evidence to defend a recommendation.

Recognize that the "shortest" route is not always the best route.

Student Challenge • Expedition Planner

You are planning a five-creature expedition from Havenbrook to a destination of your choice. Your team travels about 20 miles per day on ordinary terrain. Mountains, damaged land and difficult water crossings slow travel.

1. Sketch three plausible routes. Measure each and estimate total mileage using the map scale.
2. Estimate travel days for each route. Then add one extra day for every major obstacle you identify.
3. Score each route from 1-5 on four criteria: distance, water access, safety, and access to settlements/refuge.
4. Choose the best route. Write a 200-300 word expedition recommendation using at least three pieces of map evidence.
5. Add one uncertainty: something the map cannot tell you that could change your decision.

Optional math extension

Create a simple distance-time table for your chosen route. If the party travels 20 miles/day for two days, 12 miles/day through rough terrain for one day, then rests one day, how far has it gone and what is the average travel rate over the four-day period?

Parent notes

Require explicit evidence, not "this route looks easier."

An uncertainty can be weather, road condition, food availability, political danger, or an unmarked crossing.

Different answers are expected if the reasoning is sound.

TRAIL 1 • MAP THE WILDERLAND

High School • Grades 9-12

Learning goals

Interpret geography as a system connecting water, terrain, settlement and movement.

Create a thematic map or overlay from narrative evidence.

Use a weighted decision model to compare routes or settlement locations.

Distinguish mapped fact, textual evidence, inference and uncertainty.

Student Challenge • The Cartographer's Dilemma

Your task is to advise the Storykeepers on where a new refuge should be established as drought expands. The refuge must balance water, defensibility, access, food potential and transportation.

1. Create a thematic overlay on the Wilderland map showing at least four variables: water, drought risk, travel corridors, and settlements or population centers.
2. Identify three candidate refuge locations.
3. Build a weighted decision matrix. Choose five criteria, assign each a weight totaling 100%, score each location 1-5, and calculate weighted totals.
4. Write a 500-700 word recommendation. Cite evidence from the map and at least two relevant passages or guide references from the book materials.
5. Include a limitations paragraph: what evidence is missing, uncertain, or inferred?
6. Optional: create a second map showing how your recommendation would change if the Creeping Desert advanced another 100 miles.

Family roundtable

Each child answers one question at their level: "What makes a place safe enough to live in?"

Compare the youngest child's concrete answer with the older student's systems/tradeoff answer.

The story comes first. Use this trail when it makes the reading richer.