

A map cannot tell us everything

Pupils learn to distinguish a coastline, a meridian, a calendar change and a decision about how to represent it.

Age: 12 and above. **Time:** 50 minutes. **Materials:** pages 2 and 3 for each pair, pencils and two colours. Keep page 4 for marking. Internet access is not required.

Learning goals

- Locate the Philippines, Samoa and Kiribati in the Pacific.
- Distinguish the 180th meridian from the International Date Line.
- Separate the date of an event from the date of a map's representation.

Lesson plan

1. **5 minutes.** Ask whether every line drawn on a map is a border.
2. **10 minutes.** Locate places and read the map key (page 2).
3. **15 minutes.** Read the cards and complete the table (page 3).
4. **10 minutes.** Write a map caption in pairs.
5. **10 minutes.** Mark answers and discuss the evidence needed to draw a complete historical line.

Assessment

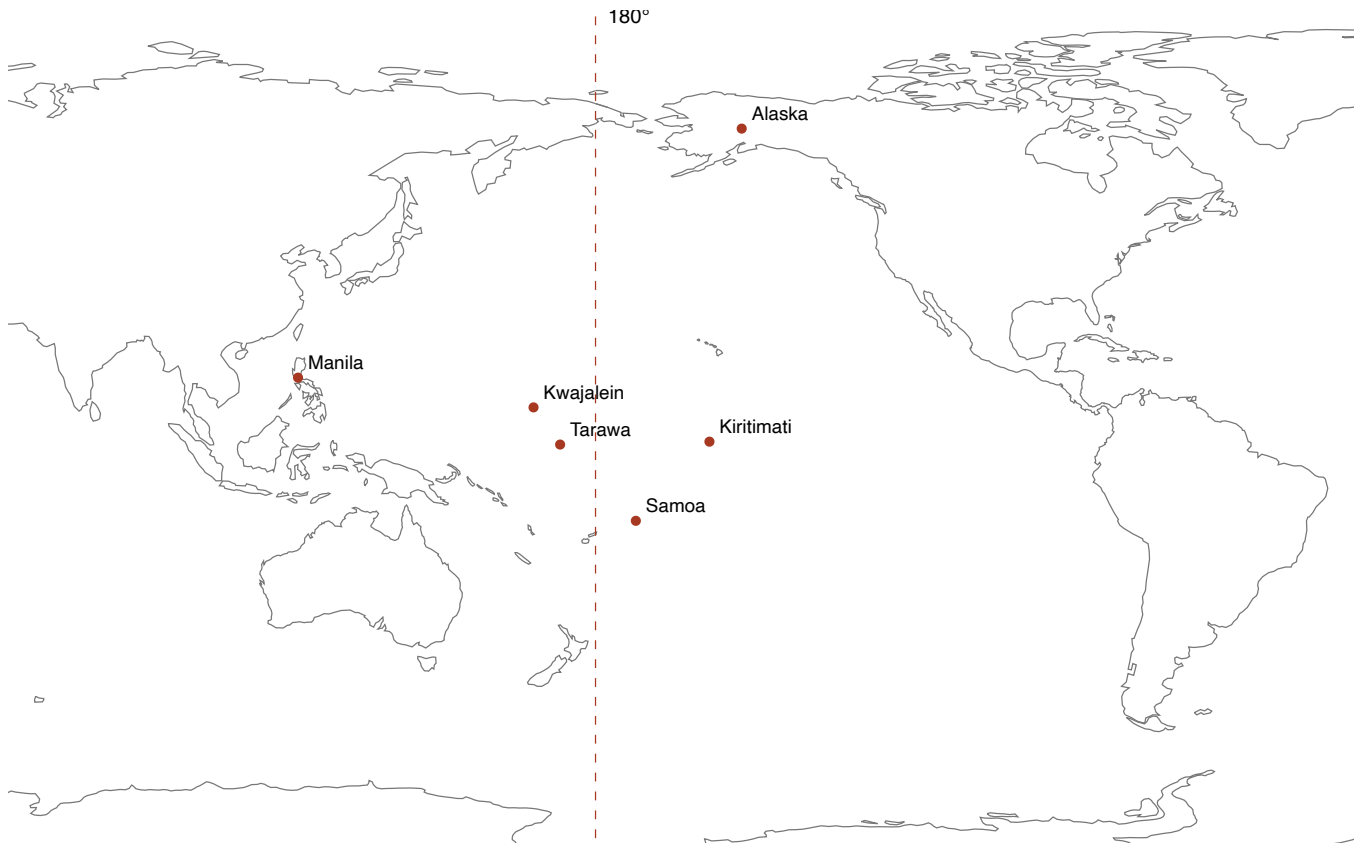
Two marks for locating places and interpreting the meridian; two for distinguishing 1995 from 2012; two for a caption stating the map's scope and limits. Total: 6 marks.

Do not ask pupils to invent a continuous global line. Missing evidence for a section may be left visible. A law changing a date does not necessarily supply every coordinate of an ocean boundary.

Support: enlarge the map in the HTML version. **Extension:** consult the 2012 bulletin and compare its “notional depiction” with the present-day coastline.

Find the places

Name: _____ Date: _____



Present-day coastline: Natural Earth, public domain. Markers are approximate. The 180° line is a reference meridian, not the Date Line. Kiribati includes several island groups: one point cannot represent its full extent.

Key: Manila is in the Philippines. Tarawa and Kiritimati belong to Kiribati.

1. Read before you draw

1. Circle the Philippines and Samoa. Which is closer to Asia?
2. Find Kiribati. Explain why one marker is not enough to represent a country of scattered islands.
3. Trace the 180th meridian. Can it alone tell you the date used in each place?

The Date Line bends away from the meridian to accommodate territories and local decisions. There is no single internationally binding global route.

1995 and 2012 tell different stories

Card A · A calendar change

IANA’s records for Kanton and Kiritimati show a jump from 30 December 1994 to 1 January 1995. It affected eastern Kiribati, not every island in the country.

Card B · Updating maps

US Department of State Bulletin 31 (2012) explains that US government maps had retained the line used before Kiribati’s 1995 change, with notes. The 2012 guidance requested an updated representation around Kiribati, Samoa and Tokelau.

2. Classify each statement

Statement	Supported, contradicted or not established by the cards? Why?
Eastern Kiribati changed its dates in 1995.	
The 2012 map update proves a new calendar jump in Kiribati in 2012.	
Every map in the world was updated in 2012.	

3. Write an honest map caption

In two or three sentences, introduce the map on the previous page. State what it shows, what the dashed line means, and what it cannot establish about the past.

What each piece of evidence shows

Places

The Philippines is closer to Asia. Kiribati stretches across several island groups, so a point is only a locator. The 180th meridian alone cannot establish local dates: rules and the Date Line can depart from it.

Classification

1. **Supported.** Card A documents the transitions in Kanton and Kiritimati. Do not extend the jump to all of Kiribati.
2. **Not established.** The 2012 update is a cartographic decision incorporating an earlier change. It does not prove a new calendar jump in Kiribati in 2012.
3. **Not established.** Card B concerns US government maps. It does not show that all publishers or governments acted together.

Possible caption

“Pacific map with a present-day coastline and approximate markers for some places in the atlas. The dashed line shows the 180th meridian. It does not represent a historical border or establish the dates used on each island in the past.”

Sources and limits

1. NOAA, What is the international date line?
<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/international-date-line.html>
2. US Department of State, Guidance Bulletin 31 (2012), pp. 1–2
https://data.geodata.state.gov/guidance/DoS_Bulletin_31-International-Dateline-2012.pdf
3. Natural Earth, 1:110m coastlines; public domain
<https://www.naturalearthdata.com/about/terms-of-use/>
4. IANA, australasia, Pacific/Kanton and Pacific/Kiritimati
<https://data.iana.org/time-zones/tzdb/australasia>

IANA is a technical record, not national legislation. The 2012 bulletin distinguishes civil change from representation; its diagram is illustrative. Natural Earth shows present-day geography, not historical coastlines or borders. These exercises do not turn the atlas's provisional reconstructions into definitive geometry.