

# Lesson

# 7

# Understanding Map Symbols and Legends

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

To use map legends to interpret symbols commonly used on maps

## READING STRATEGY

Create a chart like the one below. Fill in examples of the kinds of information each type of map symbol is used to represent.

PICTURE SYMBOL	• • •
COLORS OR SHADING	• • •

## TERMS TO KNOW

symbol, legend, key

Maps can be used to show many different kinds of information. One of the main uses of maps is to show the locations of towns and cities. However, maps can also show where cotton is grown, cattle are raised, and where different species of wild animals are found. The possibilities are almost endless.

Often one map shows more than one kind of information. This means that some way must be used to help the person reading the map understand several kinds of information shown on the map. For example, if a map shows the locations of towns, roads, and parks, there must be some way to know which is which.

## Using Map Legends

Maps use **symbols** to help the reader distinguish different kinds of information. The meaning of each symbol is explained in the map's **legend**, or **key**. Each symbol used on the map is shown, along with an explanation of what the symbol means.

Look at **Figure 1-8**. What symbol is used to show the location of a city? What symbol is used to show the location of a city that is a state capital? What symbol is used to show the location of a park?
















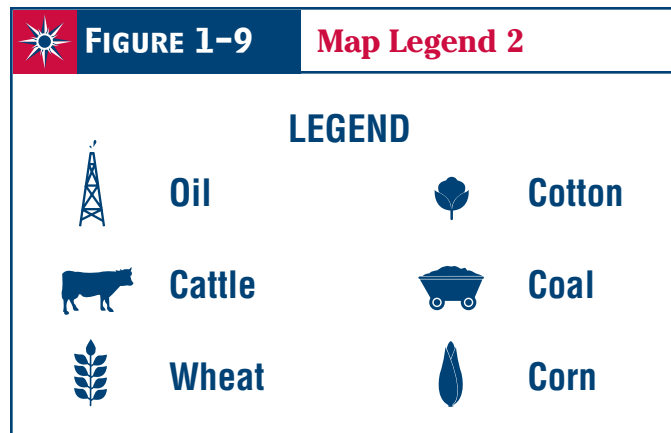
There can be many different symbols. Some maps show the kinds of products a state or country produces. Often these maps use picture symbols to show where goods are produced. For example, a small picture of an oil derrick (  ) may be used to show where oil is found. A picture of a sheep may be used to show where sheep are raised.

FIGURE 1-8		Map Legend 1	
LEGEND			
	City		Canal
	State Capital		Pipeline
	National Capital		Airport
	Boundary		Park
	Railroad		Main Road

Look at **Figure 1-9**. What symbol shows where wheat is grown? What is grown where you see the symbol (☛)?

Sometimes maps use colors or areas of shading as symbols. This is often used when the feature being shown covers a wide area. For example, **Map 1-10** uses one color to show the area covered by the Amazon River basin. Population density maps use several colors to indicate different levels of population per square mile or kilometer. Here are some examples of shading:   When you are reading a map that uses shading, you must be very careful to read the map correctly. It is easy to get shading like the following mixed up.  

If you have trouble telling such patterns apart, try this. Look at part of the map you wish to read. Then look at the legend and pick the pattern you








think is correct. Cover the others with your fingers or a piece of paper. Look at the legend and then at the map. This should help you decide if you have picked the correct pattern.

## Using Your Skills

### A PRACTICING MAP SKILLS

Use the map legends in **Figures 1-8** and **1-9** to match each symbol below with its meaning.

- |       |           |   |           |               |
|-------|-----------|---|-----------|---------------|
| _____ | <b>1.</b> |  | <b>a.</b> | wheat         |
| _____ | <b>2.</b> | ++++  | <b>b.</b> | airport       |
| _____ | <b>3.</b> |  | <b>c.</b> | corn          |
| _____ | <b>4.</b> |  | <b>d.</b> | oil           |
| _____ | <b>5.</b> |  | <b>e.</b> | railroad      |
| _____ | <b>6.</b> |  | <b>f.</b> | state capital |

## B PRACTICING MAP SKILLS

Use **Map 1-10: The Amazon Basin** and its legend to answer the questions that follow.

1. What covers most of the Amazon River basin?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In how many places in the Amazon River basin is gold found?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In what part of the Amazon River basin is coal found?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. About how many miles apart are the deposits of tin in the Amazon River basin?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In what part of the Amazon River basin is oil found? Diamonds?  
\_\_\_\_\_

