



# The usability of satirical maps as an educational aid in history class

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A satirical map is a curious map, belonging to the less explored category of alternative cartography. Satirical maps feature a geographical basemap decorated with satirical figures and have the ability to reflect the contextual nature of history. In Dutch and German history classes, satirical maps are occasionally used as historical sources, without the usability of it actually having been determined. The aim of this thesis was to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the satirical map in history class, and thereby test the hypothesis: Satirical maps possess characteristics that are contributory in reaching history class objectives, which makes the satirical map a beneficial medium in history class.

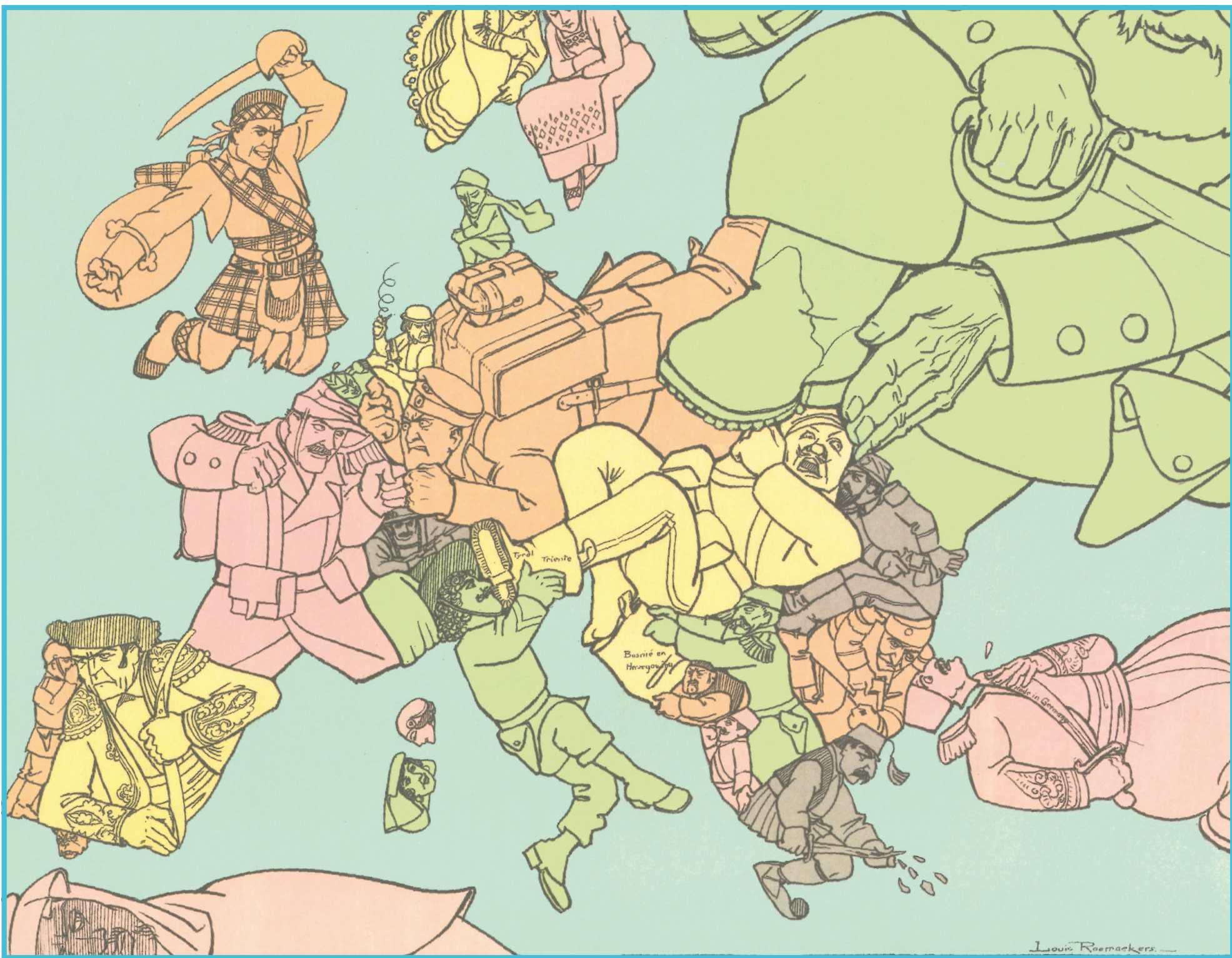


Fig. 1: Het Gekkenhuis. A satirical map from Dutch cartoonist Louis Raemaekers (1915), [1]

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this thesis has been to discover the use and usefulness of satirical maps as an educational aid in secondary school history class and to give recommendations for its potential use. This entails the goals of finding out what is known about satirical maps, what is known about the learning objectives in secondary school history class, and what the use and usefulness of both the satirical and plain maps is as an educational aid.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is known about the usability of satirical maps?
2. What is known about education objectives?
3. How do students and teachers value the use of a satirical map in contrast to a plain map?
4. How effective and efficient is working with a satirical map in contrast to a plain map?
5. What conclusion can be drawn concerning the usability of a satirical map in contrast to a plain map?

## RELATED SUBJECTS

In contrast to the satirical map as an unexplored concept, its most prominent components – cartoons, art, humor, and satire – have often been subject to study. By collecting those findings in literature on related topics (e.g. visual content, persuasiveness, engagement, etc.) and applying them to satirical maps, this thesis provides a starting point in investigating the usability of satirical maps in today's history class.

## METHODOLOGY

This usability study has followed a mixed design, in which a comparison is made between satirical [1] and plain [3] maps. Multiple methods and techniques have been used: interviews with teachers, questionnaires filled out by students, and observations conducted in class. The ISO 9241-11 standard defines usability as the "extent to which a system, product or service can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use" [2]. This definition is applied, though slightly altered, in that also the teachers are involved in the usability assessment.



Fig. 2: A plain map showing the alliances at the start of World War One (1914), [3]

## RESULTS

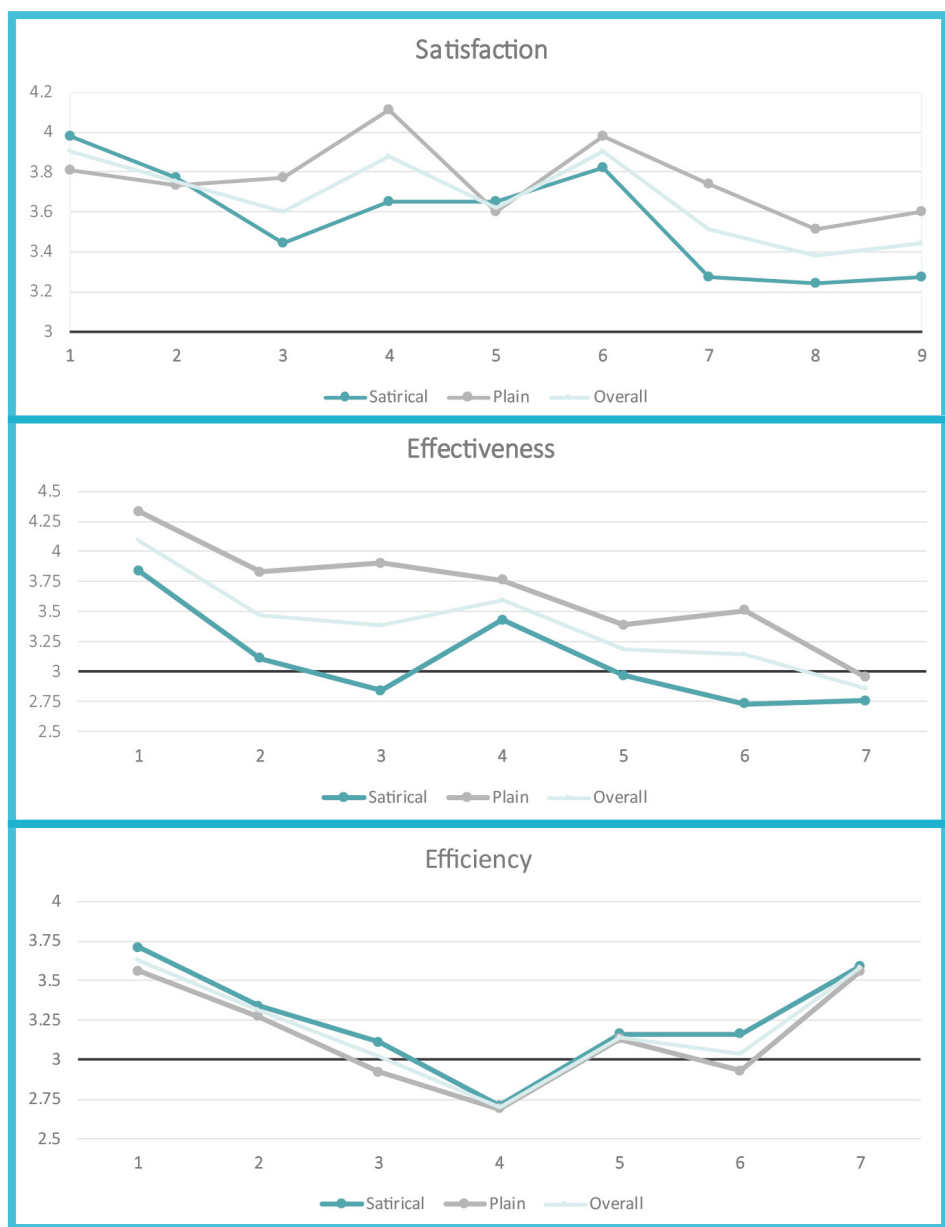


Fig. 3: Usability measures of both maps (mean score of each statement on a Likert scale)

## CONCLUSION

Satirical maps meet the most important learning objectives in history class, e.g. creative, critical, and analytical thinking, acknowledging different points of view and the embeddedness of historical events in a certain context. Moreover, the results of the usability study show a positive evaluation from students and teachers, who find a satirical map useful, interesting, and entertaining. The humorous appearance is appreciated, and the subjective projection of historic events is seen as an advantage. If time allows an introduction to the map and students understand why they are used, satirical maps can function well as an educational aid in history class precisely because they have different qualities than plain maps. The hypothesis can thereby be confirmed; satirical maps do possess characteristics that are contributory in reaching history class objectives, which makes the satirical map a beneficial medium in history class.

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usability, satirical maps, cartoons,  
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## REFERENCES

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- [2] ISO (2018) *ISO 9241-11. Usability: Definitions and concepts*
- [3] Santon, K. and MacKay, L. (2010) *Grote Atlas van de Wereldgeschiedenis*, p. 221.

## LINK TO THE THESIS

