

Chapter 12 Discussion Questions

1. Chapter 12 argues that symbols are visual arguments rather than illustrations. What claims do symbols make about presence, category, importance, movement, or uncertainty before users consult the legend?
2. Shape can clarify categories, but pictographic icons can also import cultural assumptions or emotional baggage. When is a literal icon helpful, and when is abstraction more ethical or more legible?
3. Proportional symbols require mathematical honesty. How should students demonstrate that symbol size represents magnitude accurately rather than merely looking persuasive?
4. Opacity and texture can communicate hierarchy, overlap, and uncertainty. What risks emerge when these variables are used without explicit legend language or prompt constraints?
5. Custom PNG and SVG symbols can strengthen a map's visual identity, but they can also drift into decorative detail. What constraints should define whether custom symbols are worth using?