

Creating a Historic Site Lesson Plan

BY THE CIVIL WAR TRUST

Grades: 3-6

Length of Time: 6-7 class days

Goals:

1. To understand why some historic sites are preserved.
2. To learn the meaning of historic significance.
3. To understand that historic sites are unique and non-renewable resources that must be preserved since they cannot be replaced.

Objectives:

1. Students will list aloud 3 qualities of a historic site.
2. Students will choose a location and provide a written argument for the site's historical significance.
3. Students will gather artifacts appropriate to their historical site.
4. Students will present their site as a historical location in an exhibit format.

Materials Used:

1. Paper
2. Markers
3. Cameras
4. The internet

Procedure:

Anticipatory Set/Hook as well as Activity 1

Ask your students to suggest some historic sites. Make a list on the blackboard and discuss with the class what each of the sites has in common. (For example: each site is located where something important occurred, the site has visitors, in general the staff at a historic site try to keep the place looking the way it did at the time of the event, there is usually a museum or signs to interpret the event.)

Discussion Points:

What does important mean (historical significance)?

How do historians know something important happened at a site?

What makes a place a historic site?

What can historic sites teach us?

Activity 2

Split the class into teams of five students. Have each team pick a place to declare a historic site. This could be a student's birthplace, the school gym where a big basketball game occurred, or even the local mall where Santa's workshop was set up in December. They should be prepared to defend their choice on the basis of historic significance. The teams should decide what historic event to interpret and conduct research to prove that the event occurred and to determine objectively exactly what happened. They can conduct oral histories by talking to their parents or fellow students, check photo albums, letters, newspapers at the library, etc.

The teams should collect "artifacts" that were on site when the event occurred and primary source documents that tell the story of the event and the site. The students should consider what story these artifacts and documents tell and write exhibit labels to accompany them.

Each team should draw two maps of the site, one as it is now, and one as it was when the event occurred.

The teams should make signs to hang at the site, interpreting it. They should design and draw or build out of clay a monument to be placed on or near the site for visitors, and they should create a brief tour for guides to give.

The teams should present their historic sites to the class, discussing how each artifact, sign, map, and monument will help visitors to understand and learn from the event that occurred on their site.

Closure:

After the presentations, discuss why it is important that the historic site be located where the event occurred.

The presentations are given in the classroom. Would actually visiting the site provide a different kind of experience?

Would it be any easier or more fun to learn on-site than to study the site in the classroom? Would a tour of any place be the same as going to the original place? How would they feel if someone destroyed the site? What would be lost?

Assessment:

Go back to the objectives, and make sure that each of your students has met the objectives.

Modifications:

1. Only choose one of the activities
2. Place students with peers who can assist them in their areas of need
3. Provide examples or outlines for maps, signs, or monuments