

Connecting with Nature: Student Life through 100 years in Thetford

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Overall theme: “Game of Village” - an interdisciplinary exploration of local history and local place

Essential Question: How have children’s relationships with nature changed over the past 100 years in Thetford, Vermont?

Grades 4-6

Overview

Goals:

- Increase our environmental literacy and our attachment to place through an exploration of Thetford’s history
- Engage in local studies and sense of place activities – What are the local natural resources of this place? How were they used? How has our relationship with this place (Thetford) changed over time?
- Consider what we currently do outdoors – What do we currently do outdoors as a school? Can we broaden the types of activities we do outside? How do our students engage with nature at school and at home? How does this compare to the way children interacted with nature 100 years ago?
- Focus on primary source materials - studying the past and the present of Thetford through field trips, artifacts, stories, observations, and primary sources

Engage: personifying the past by representing a person who lived in our town 100 years ago

Students will understand:

- H&SS3-4:8 Students connect the past to the present by explaining differences between historic and present day objects in Vermont and identifying how the use of the object itself changed over time and describes ways that life in the community and Vermont has both changed and stayed the same
- H&SS3-4:12 Students show understanding of human interaction with the environment over time by describing how people have changed the environment in VT for specific purposes...and identify...ways they can contribute to preserving environmental resources
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3](#) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- 3-5-ETS1.A: Defining and Delimiting Engineering Problems:
 - 3-5-ETS1-1. Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.
 - 3-5-ETS1-2. Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
- MS-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity
 - [All human activity draws on natural resources and has positive and negative consequences for people and the natural environment. \(MS-ESS3-1\),\(MS-ESS3-4\)](#)
 - [The uses of technologies are driven by individual or societal needs/values and vary from region to region and over time. \(MS-ESS3-2\),\(MS-ESS3-3\)](#)

Students will be able to:

- carefully observe aspects of their local environment
- make connections between how people live now and how they lived in the past

- express empathy for other people and their situations
- find ways that they connect to the natural world
- understand relationships between people and the natural world in which they live
- analyze primary sources including maps, census records, and photographs
- research specific artifacts related to the use of natural resources such as water, light, wood, livestock, and soil
- use artifacts to tell a broader story of how people lived and the natural resources they used in their daily lives
- ask meaningful questions about their local place and history
- extrapolate to use what they know to help figure out what they don't know
- research for information
- synthesize information to tell a compelling story about life in 1900

Length of Unit: one class per week throughout much of the year

Project Sequence

1. Becoming historians -

- a) Meet with World Story Exchange at least 2 times
 - Learn how to look carefully at objects.
 - Learn how to take quality and compelling photographs.
 - Learn how to look at an object in a way that can tell a story about it.
- b) Observe an artifact – look closely at an artifact. What might it be used for? Would it have been used outside or inside? Who might have used it (men, women, children)?
- c) Sort Tool Cards (<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/historical-forensics-tool-cards>)
What might each tool have been used for? Would it have been used outside or inside? Who might have used it (men, women, children)?

2. Connect -

- a) *Personifying the Past:* Have each student choose a child who lived in your town [Thetford] in 1900, use local [Thetford's] census records to learn about each person. If possible, ask your local Historical Society to help you find a *school photograph* identifying local students in 1900. Choose students from the photo who can also be located in the census records. (You can access Heritage Quest from your local library's website to find the census information on each historical character.)
 - Who lived with each student?
 - Who lived nearby?
 - Where were they born and where were their parents born?
 - What was their father's occupation?
 - Did they rent or own their home?
- b) *Field Trips:*
 - Antique Hill at the Tunbridge Fair (September) – overview of farming lifestyle and daily life in 1800s.
 1. Consider – “What would it have been like for my 1900s character to be here?”
 2. Research – As an historian, document what you see. What connections can you make between what you see and how people lived in the late 19th century and early 1900s?
 - Justin Morrill Homestead (later in October) – investigation of artifacts related to food preservation; teams of two take photos of an assigned artifact and its use. Consider the steps involved for processes such as making butter,

cutting/storing/using ice, collecting and using water, caring for livestock, cooling food, lighting a house, washing clothing.

3. **Context** – overview of US History for contextual information
 - a) **Create a timeline** of significant **national or world events**
 - b) Use the card game *Timeline* by Asmodee as an overview of historical events and important inventions. Have students add their own cards to the deck as they learn about additional events in history.
 - c) Consider the questions:
 - “How might this local place have been influenced by national/global events?”
 - “What was recent history for our characters?”
 - “Who was the U.S. President during the time period the students are researching?”
 - “What were recent technological advances in the year 1900?”
 - “What technological advances would our characters have experienced during their lifetimes?”

4. **General Research 1895-1915**
 - a) read *Diary of a Little Girl* (diary of a young girl who lived in Strafford, VT) – fill in chart to analyze chores throughout the year
 - b) Suzanna French’s history of Thetford: *Images of America: Thetford*
 - c) read *Understood Betsy* by Dorothy Canfield Fisher as a whole school read aloud (written in 1918)
 - d) “Then and Now” from the point of view of our 1900s characters: *early* settlers’ lifestyles compared to that of people in 1900 (Victorian era).
 - We used vintage Playmobil tools, livestock, and wagons with our own handmade wooden houses to represent an early American village. This is a way to draw younger children into these conversations. (We have a multi-aged setting.)
 - “Then and Now” Artifacts kit from Norwich Historical Society to compare objects that we use today with historical artifacts.
 - e) Consider people’s lifestyles in 1900:
 - What would the home have been like?
 - What did the land around Thetford look like?
 - How would that person have used their time?
 - Tasks they did and *where* those chores were done – kitchen, outside, barn, ice pond...
 - How were machines powered? -
 1. Human power
 2. Animal power
 3. Water power - Thetford Center Dam (Thetford Historical Society, Dean and Sally)
 4. Steam power– Samual Morey
 - f) Reading Maps
 - Find homes, school(s), church(es), general store(s) on a map if possible
 - How might our historical characters have gotten to school or to town? How far was it? Were there rivers to cross or hills to climb?
 - How might the natural landscape have played a roll in how the villages were settled?

5. **Research artifacts** related to direct use of natural resources
 - a) **Assign:**
 - Water – water pump
 - Ice – ice house, ice tools
 - Trees/wood – wood stove
 - Livestock(cows) – butter worker and butter churn

- Lighting – natural light, candles, kerosene lanterns
 - Earth – transportation, horses, road building tools
- b) **Choose:** Alternately, following the trip to the *Justin Morrill Homestead*, work with the students to make a list of all the artifacts they remember seeing, their uses, and the related natural resources. (Pulling out the *Tool Cards* again might help with this.) Have pairs of students choose an artifact (and its corresponding natural resource) to study.

6. Immersion experiences:

- a) Field trip to *Billings Farm & Museum's Farmhouse* – participate in barn chores, cooking, and household tasks through their program called “A Day in 1890: Living History for Young People” https://billingsfarm.org/education_programs/januaryfebruary/ Take additional photographs for the
- b) *Ice harvest*: <https://www.vtliving.com/events/brookfieldiceharvest/> Saturday, January 25, 2020

7. Reflection:

- How do we know what we know about the past?
- Whose stories are remembered and told?
- What natural resources were important to people living in Thetford/New England in 1900? Are they still important today? In what ways?

8. Synthesize Information:

- a) As a class, use a Venn Diagram to *compare and contrast* aspects of daily life at The Justin Morrill Homestead and the Manager's House at Billings Farm & Museum.
- b) Each pair of students will *write an essay* about their artifact and how it fits within the steps of accessing and using a particular natural resource. (i.e. Rain water gets collected from the roof, stored in a cistern in the basement, pumped to the attic, and then accessed via a faucet in the kitchen. It then gets heated on a wood burning stove and used in a swing washer to clean clothing.)
- c) Create short *historical fiction videos* highlighting the use of a specific artifact, use local historical Thetford residents as main characters
- Have each pairs of students consider the steps sequenced in their essays and what they know about their historical characters.
 - Work with World Story Exchange on story telling techniques:
 1. watch and analyze examples of videos by other students
 2. honing in on sensory details
 3. using narrative and images to tell different parts of the same story
 4. using compelling language in the narration to “show” not “tell”
 - Dramatic arch of (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoIwJh9hs8>, <http://www.docudramaqueen.com/?p=358>)
 1. *Exposition*: The set up and introduction to the characters, the setting, and the overall story.
 2. *Inciting Incident*: Momentum or an “incident” that propels the story forward.
 3. *Complication*: The story intensifies as characters overcome (or are overcome by) obstacles or as unexpected changes in the storyline happen.
 4. *Climax*: The crest of the story arc where there is no turning back; a life-changing moment for the historical character.
 5. *Resolution*: Wrap up the story and provide a sense of completion.
 - Work with World Story Exchange to create story boards –
 1. How – and where - would these two historical characters interact?
 2. What task are they trying to perform? (Make sure to include the assigned artifact!)
 3. What complication do they encounter?

4. How do they overcome this complication?
 5. Wrap up the story.
 - Work with World Story Exchange to learn how to use iMovie
 1. learn about aspects of using the application
 2. identify, organize, and import photographs into iMovie
 3. record each team's narrative and import it into iMovie
 4. build images into the sequence following each teams' story board
 5. pair narratives with images
 6. learn editing techniques
 - *Keep the scope of the project as narrow as possible to increase the likelihood of having a good quality finished product.*
9. **Human Impact:** *Explore how humans have impacted their local surroundings over time*
- a) Watch and discuss UVM's Slide Show about deforestation: "Where have all the forests gone?" <https://www.uvm.edu/landscape/learn/Downloads/scrapbooks/forests2.pdf>
 - b) Accompanying worksheet: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TuYfOsQBEJH9-XZQcRPc0SiD80hH3ho4RxrDNxstP4Y/edit?usp=sharing>
 - c) Use the Harvard Diorama images to look at how New England forests have changed over time: <https://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/diorama-series/landscape-history-central-new-england>
 - d) What might some unintended consequences have been of each historical character's way of life? What are some ways to mitigate some of those problems?
10. **Modern-day Autobiographies:** Who am I in this place?
- a) What is my home like? Where is it?
 - b) What does the land around my home look like? How do I interact with the land?
 - c) How do I use my time? - Things I do at home and *where* I do them (room, outside, kitchen, ...)
 - d) How are machines that I use powered?
 - e) How do I get to school?
 - f) Show home, school, church, stores on a map
11. **Reflection**
- a) "How did I decide what to include and what to leave out of my stories?"
 - b) "How much of what I do is influenced by nature?"
 - c) "What is my relationship to nature? - what activities do I do outside?"
12. **Share films** at library with discussion question:
 "What is my relationship with nature? What kind of relationships did people have with nature 100 years ago? How has people's relationship with nature changed over time?"

Assessments of learning

- Create an *historical fiction film* that tells the story of a resident of Thetford, VT using an artifact designed for food preservation, water use, dairy production or transportation in 1900
 Our examples: <https://vimeo.com/424409784/f3c2bb9b20>
- Answer questions after screenings of their films
- Dialogue with people in a meaningful way about their research, creative process, and overall content of their project.

Supporting resources

- Visit your local *historical society*, *university archives*, and *environmental educator* to locate:
 - As many historical maps as you can find (also visit websites such as <http://www.davidrumsey.com/> and <http://vcgi.vermont.gov/maps/historic>)
 - Primary sources and artifacts (diaries, letters, photographs of school children)
 - Local elders, historians, content specialists
- Technical support from your school's technology specialist or a group such as World Story Exchange (<https://www.worldstoryexchange.org/>)
- Filmmaking guidance (<https://freedomandunitytv.org/filmmaking101/>)
- Online research resources:
 - preserving food
 - <http://www.mtnlaurel.com/mountain-memories/704-country-living-185>
 - [1900.htmlhttps://turnofthecenturyamerica.blogspot.com/2012/06/1900-food-prices.htm](https://turnofthecenturyamerica.blogspot.com/2012/06/1900-food-prices.htm)
 - <https://www.ncpedia.org/culture/food/cooking-in-the-1800s>
 - water
 - attic cistern <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/hhh.md0492.photos.083085p/>
 - trees
 - Harvard's New England Forest Dioramas - <https://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/dioramas>
 - buildings, change over time
 - UVM's Landscape Change site <http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/>,
- Books
 - Bobbie Kalman books: *The Kitchen*, *Transportation*
 - Suzanna French's history of Thetford: *Images of America: Thetford*
 - *Understood Betsy* by Dorothy Canfield Fisher
 - *Over the River and Through the Years* 6 volume series by Katherine Blaisdell
 - Eric Sloane books

Extension

read *Thetford Pageant* (1911) – pageants as advertisements – what was their message? What kind of relationship did Thetford residents of 1900 seem to have with local Native Americans? City dwellers?