

Unit Roadmap

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Unit title: *The Story of a Building*

Grade level: 5th & 6th (and up)

Goals of this unit: The goal of this project is to use the students' own school building (or other historically relevant building) as a window into understanding generalizable trends of early American settlement and the natural resources they relied upon. The students will learn about the history of the building by analyzing primary sources, reading related secondary sources, and interviewing community members and/or local historians. They will then tell the story of the building through visuals and audio to share with a larger community.

Although the final outcome of this project was a film about the history of the Open Fields School building in Thetford, Vermont (<https://vimeo.com/211136214>), this roadmap offers a general overview of the process of researching and making a documentary film about **any historical building.

Essential questions to consider:

What natural resources were available in this location for humans to use? (ecology, geology)

Where in [your town] did early settlers live and why? (ecology/geography)

What tools/technology did early European settlers use to clear land and build buildings? (STEM)

What methods of transportation did early settlers use? (STEM, geography)

How did they trade their own surplus products for other goods? (economics)

How might this local place have been influenced by national/global events? (politics)

Engage: Then and Now Comparison – Help students ask and answer their own questions about “How did this come to be?” “How was this place used over time by different people?” “How did people change this place?”

Students will understand:

- People relied on their local natural resources to survive
- Cycle of Innovation: the desire to solve daily life problems drives changes in technology, technology drives social change and impacts our surroundings (eg. Demands of daily life effects transportation, transportation effects daily life). Consider the intended and unintended consequences of human innovation.
- Buildings and villages/communities go through gradual, incremental changes – change over time.
- Engineering solutions to 19th century problems (crossing rivers, constructing buildings...)
- Use of simple machines
- DCIs
 - [4-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity](#)
 - [3-5-ETS1 Engineering Design](#), [MS-ETS1 Engineering Design](#)

Students will know:

- Rivers within their school's (building's) watershed
- Natural resources used by early settlers
- Examples of simple machines used by settlers
- Examples of the trade economy
- Science of water power

Students will be able to:

- Explain the significance of this particular building within the context of their town's history.
- Ask meaningful questions about their local place and consider ways that the environment has been impacted by people and the people impacted by their environment.

Assessments of learning:

- Create a film that tells (part of) the story of their [school] building
- Answer questions after screenings of their film
- Dialogue with people in a meaningful way about their research, creative process, and overall content of their project.

Length of Unit:

- 20 weeks, 3-4 hours per week

Resources:

- Visit your local *historical society*, *university archives*, and *environmental educator* to locate:
 - A topographical map of your area
 - 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
 - Deeds (from the town hall)
 - Local elders, historians, content specialists
- Access to iMovie.
- Technical support from your school's technology specialist or a group such as The World Story Exchange (<https://www.worldstoryexchange.org/>)
- Filmmaking guidance (<https://freedomandunitytv.org/filmmaking101/>)

Timeline:

Week 1 (Introduction)

- Introduce the idea of telling the story of a local historical building.
- Assess the students' prior knowledge about the history of their historic [school] building:
 - When do you think this building was constructed? What makes you think that?
 - What types of tools do you think people used to construct this building?
 - What do you think it was originally used for? What is your evidence?
 - Why do you think this building is in this particular place?
 - What might this physical place have looked like long ago?
 - Where might people have gotten the materials for constructing this building?
 - How might they have transported these materials?
 - How do you think the place and the building have changed over time?
 - How can we answer some of these questions?

Weeks 2 & 3 (Photography and filming techniques)

- **Technology** Tutorials –
 - examples of photographic techniques
 - how to take quality photographs
 - examples of filming techniques
 - how to take good video
 - how to set up and conduct an interview
- Get to know the historians at your local **historical society** and **town hall**.

Week 4 (Maps – a primary source)

- Analyze a topographical map of your local area. Notice the location of rivers and other bodies of water. Notice areas of high elevation. What is geographically interesting about your region? Consider the question: “*What natural resources did people in this area have?*”
- Analyze historical **maps** of your town.
 - Copy a map and cut it into “puzzle pieces” so that students will look up close at one small section of the map at a time. Put the pieces together.
 - Have the students organize the maps from oldest to more recent. How has the village/region changed over time? Can they identify which buildings were the original buildings in their area? Are the buildings clustered around specific geographic features (i.e rivers)?
 - As a group, have the students make a chart of all the buildings they see on their map. Organize the chart by year to compare the types of buildings in the town over time. Why might this change?
- What names are associated with your building on each of the maps? Are there any clues about how it was used? Did the building change shape or location over time?
 - Write each name and the corresponding dates on note cards to place onto a large **timeline** on the wall. You will add to this timeline throughout the project.
 - Hopefully students will start to “build a relationship” with these historical characters.
- Start a list of **questions** students have about the local natural resources, tools and technology people used, methods of transportation, trade between people in your town or between your town and other regions, and how global/national events might have impacted their town.

Week 5 (Deeds – a primary source)

- Analyze past **deeds** for the building (access deeds from local town hall)
 - Who owned the building? For how long? Any clues what it was used for?
 - How far back can you trace the ownership of the building?
 - Can you discover when it was built? (Making connections: What methods of transportation existed when it was built?)
 - Are names that were mentioned on the maps also appearing on the deeds?
- Write each name and the corresponding dates on note cards to place onto a **timeline**.
- Students can use **census records** to do additional research
 - Look up owners of the building
 - Using a known reference point – such as the name of a long term neighbor – students can look up occupants of the building they are researching

Week 6 (Secondary sources)

- Investigate **secondary sources**.
 - What is the overview of the story of your local area?
 - As they read, have the students write down **questions** they have, people they are interested in, topics they would like to pursue, a specific timeframe.
 - Have each student read in depth about one specific point of interest and report back to the group
- Add details to your **timeline**.

Weeks 7 & 8 (Other primary sources)

- Investigate **primary sources** (photographs, diaries, account books, letters, artifacts)
- Choose one source to analyze as a group to model the 3C’s and an S approach from Stanford University’s [“Reading like a Historian”](#)
 - *Sourcing*: Who made this source? When did they make it?
 - *Contextualizing*: Why was this source made? What historical events contributed to its making?
 - *Close Examination*: What does this source tell us? What clues does it reveal? What does it tell us about the historical era in general?

- *Corroborating*: Do other sources confirm or contest what this resource tells us? What discrepancies, if any, are there?
 - *Further Investigation*: What questions does this source leave unanswered?
- If possible, go to your local **historical society** with the students to gather documents that help to answer some of the students' **questions**. Otherwise, ask the historians to help gather materials for you and your students to use in class.
- How can you learn more about the story of your building using these primary sources?
- Keep in mind the **essential questions** as you research:
 - Where in [your town] did early settlers live and why? (ecology/geography)
 - What *tools/technology* did early European settlers use to clear land and build buildings? (STEM)
 - What methods of *transportation* did early settlers use? (STEM, geography)
 - How did they *trade* their own surplus products for other goods? (economics)
 - How might this local place have been *influenced* by national/global events? (politics)
- Continue to follow the students' specific interests (people, time periods, points of interest – water power, lighting, transportation, tools, clothing, trade goods...) Can students answer any of their questions? What new questions do they have? Have the students gather specific images that help to illustrate aspects of their subtopics.

Week 9 (Sense of place)

- Explore the **natural surroundings**. If possible, work with an environmental educator.
- Look for ways that the land has changed over time.
- “What natural resources did people in this area have?”
 - What natural resources would have been used by Native American?
 - By early European settlers?
 - How might those resources have changed over time?
 - What was their water source?
 - What were their building materials?
 - What was the flora and fauna of that time?

Week 10 (Contextual information)

- Add significant **national or world events** to the **timeline**.
- Who was the U.S. President during the time period the students are researching?
- Use the card game *Timeline* by Asmodee as an overview of historical events and important inventions.
- Consider the question: “How might this local place have been influenced by national/global events?”

Week 11 (Making a plan)

- **Narrow the scope** of your story.
- Give each student several sticky notes. Have them place their sticky notes on the timeline to indicate their top choices of which details/strands/people/timeframes to focus on for the culminating project and further research.
- (Consider subtopics such as *transportation, clothing, tools, education, natural resources, trade economy, power...*)
- Create a condensed timeline reflecting the students' top choices.
- Make a clear **plan** for the film/story. How can these ideas fit together into a compelling story?
 - Make sure you can complete this sentence: *This film tells the story of _____.*
 - What historical characters will be included in the story? (The building itself may be a “character” in the story.)
 - Consider what voice/lens to use to tell the story
 - Choose a **sequence** so that there is a compelling flow to the overarching story:

- Three act story structure:
 - Act 1: Story Set-Up (How will you introduce your characters, story, conflict?)
 - Act 2: Story Development (How will you build upon your Act 1 set-up?)
 - Act 3: Story Resolution (How will you close your film?)
- Dramatic arch of (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lolwJh9hs8>, <http://www.docudramaqueen.com/?p=358>)
 - *Exposition*: The set up and introduction to the characters, the setting, and the overall story.
 - *Inciting Incident*: Momentum or an "incident" that propels the story forward.
 - *Complication*: The story intensifies as characters overcome (or are overcome by) obstacles or as unexpected changes in the storyline happen.
 - *Climax*: The crest of the story arc where there is no turning back; a life-changing moment for the historical character.
 - *Resolution*: Wrap up the story and provide a sense of completion.
- Keep the scope of the project as narrow as possible to increase the likelihood of having a good quality finished product!
- Consider ways to transition between each section of the story.

Week 12 (Storyboarding)

- Have each student (or small group of students) do further research on a subtopic or chapter and take responsibility for telling that part of the story.
- Have each student/group **create a storyboard** (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/myplacemyspace/promote-your-day-out/with-film/sample-storyboard.shtml>) to organize the details for their portion of the story.
- Keep in mind the available sources for **images** for telling the story:
 - Primary sources (scanned maps, documents, letters, photographs)
 - Secondary sources (scanned photographs or drawings from books and articles)
 - Photographs of artifacts
 - Related images from the Vermont History Society, Library of Congress, National Archives...
 - Modern photographs of the physical area
 - Re-enactments
 - Drawings
 - Claymation
 - Filmed interviews

Week 13 (iMovie tutorial, importing images)

- Provide a **tutorial** to the students about how to use iMovie. (https://www.google.fr/search?q=imovie+tutorial&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=1SxJWeDdA8HzaKzTvWA#gws_rd=cr&kpvalbx=1)
- Scan documents that help tell the particular story that the students want to focus on.
- Have each student/group work on a separate computer or take turns as needed.
- Have students organize their scanned **images** and import them into **iMovie**.

Week 14 (Narrations)

- Have the students use their storyboards to write **narratives**. The narratives should help explain the images they have imported, fill in details that may not have a corresponding image, and add a layer of intrigue to the story.
- Students read their narratives aloud and record them with iMovie. This requires a quiet space with students taking turns or leaving the room to work in a temporary "recording booth" of some kind.
- The audio can also be interviews or recorded conversations with local historians and community members. Conduct interviews as needed – use an external microphone for better audio quality.
- Visit **on-site locations** in the community to take photographs as additional support of the narratives and to record additional audio.

Weeks 15 & 16 (Editing)

- Students match up their images and their narration (and other audio) to tell their portion of the story.
- Stay on an image long enough for the audience to really see it without lingering too long.
- Consider using (but not overusing) cropping techniques such as the Ken Burns effect.
- Add text to help connect the images and clarify the narration. (Everyone should use the same font style and size for continuity throughout the film.)
- Decide on a maximum length for each section so the final film is a manageable length.
- Using a system such as AirDrop, combine all the students' first draft film clips together into one movie.

Week 17 (Preview screening)

- Offer a **preview** of the film to invested members of the community or school to gather feedback and suggestions about the film.
- Be sure to include parents, historians, and filmmakers to get comments regarding the content as well as the quality of the film and the clarity of the story.

Weeks 18 & 19 (Revisions)

- Make a copy of the original film before making edits.
- Consider changing the order of some of the clips to clarify the story.
- Go through the film as a whole to equalize the sound and add transitions between the images.

Week 20 (Final screening!)

- Make a night of it!
- Consider inviting the local historical society to bring primary sources for people to see after the film screening.
- Have a table of artifacts that people can handle following the screening.
- Provide old-fashioned games and small chalkboards for children to play with.
- Celebrate your accomplishments!

Activities to support learning targets:

- **Thinking Like a Historian:** http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/historical_thinking/article.html
The teacher's role is to act as a mentor and help students uncover their own discoveries about their local environment and how it changed over time.
- **Natural resources:** consider all the natural resources that were used to build the [school] building, and for the building to function in it's designated capacity. Have students create Mind Maps, charts, or posters as a means for highlighting these natural resources.
- Play the **Timeline Card Game** (<https://www.asmodee.us/en/games/timeline/>) to help students understand change over time and consider the sequence of inventions and events. As they compare different cards, the students can use critical thinking skills to help deduce the relative sequence of events even if they don't know the actual dates.
- Plan a **field trip** to a living history museum, Shaker Museum, or historical society so the students can see artifacts within an historical context.

Supporting resources:

Human Resources:

World Story Exchange <https://www.worldstoryexchange.org/>

Vermont Folklife Center <https://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/workshops>

Websites

Primary sources:

UVM's Landscape Change Program <http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/>

Vermont Historical Society <http://vermonthistory.org/research>

Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/>

National Registry of Historic Places <https://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp>

Maps:

David Ramsey <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>

Vermont Center for Geographic Information <http://vcgi.vermont.gov/maps/historic>

Techniques for filmmaking:

Freedom and Unity's Filmmaking 101 <https://freedomandunitytv.org/filmmaking101/>

Resource Tips <https://freedomandunitytv.org/resourcestips/>

iMovie tutorial https://www.google.fr/search?q=imovie+tutorial&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=1SxJWeDdA8HzaKzTvWA#gws_rd=cr&kpvalbx=1

Teacher Resources:

Teaching with Historic Places <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/index.htm>

Books and Games:

Bobbie Kalman Historic Communities books such as

Children's Clothing of the 1800s

The General Store

Transportation

Tools and Gadgets

19th Century Girls and Women

A Museum of Early American Tools by Eric Sloane

Timeline Card Game by Asmodee <https://www.asmodee.us/en/games/timeline/>

Thetford specific resources:

Thetford Historical Society resources:

- *Thetford Academy: The First 100 Years* by Mary Slade
- *A Short History of Thetford* by Charles Latham
- *The Story of Thetford Hill*
- *Beloved Village* by Charles Latham
- *Fifty for 250 – An Anthology of Thetford's History 1761-2011* by Thetford Historical Society

Thetford by Susanna French

National Registry for Historic Places for Thetford Hill

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=300f56b3-ff6b-4516-bf64-2c44d00791a4>

Once Upon a Town: a Romantic and Factual Chronicle of the Early Families and Houses of Thetford, Vermont by Charlotte McCartney