

Activity Overview

Students will create a time-line from the time of settlement to the present and write journal entries from chosen points in time, describing natural surroundings and the changes they see.

Objectives

Students will:

- Gain historical perspectives of changes in eco-systems through imagining the landscape at key historical moments on a time-line.
- Learn to write assuming points of view of people in the past and present.
- Learn to use original sources, literature and first-hand accounts at key historical junctures.
- Gain understanding about the value of ecological restoration for present and future generations.

Subjects

Language Arts and Social Studies

Grades

3 through 12

Time

50 minutes

Season

Any

Materials

Writing materials and some research materials

State Standards

Language Arts: A.4.1., A.4.2., A.4.3., A.4.4., A.8.1., A.8.2., A.8.3., A.8.4., A.12.1., A.12.2., A.12.3., A.12.4., B.4.1., B.4.2., B.8.3., B.8.1., B.8.2., B.8.3., B.12.1., B.12.2., B.12.3, F.4.1., F>8.1., F.12.1.

Background

Historians are not the only people who notice how much things can change in a century or even a decade. People who live through those changes can remember when things were different. Think of how people born in the 1920's could not imagine the kind of cars we have today and yet we now have vehicles that are powered by solar, water and even electric energy. People who went to school during the 1950's had no concept of a computer and today they are used every day in classrooms all over the world. Just as technology has changed rapidly, so have other things like living conditions and even the landscape. People just a decade older than you can probably remember when there wasn't a shopping mall in that place or when that subdivision used to be a cornfield. It is also important to note that as the landscape changes so do our lives, and vice versa. All over the world people are building more subdivisions, office complexes, shopping malls, taking up more and more space leaving less space for growing food or natural habitat. There are also fewer natural areas left for children to explore and be connected to growing things. Restoring ecosystems is a way for people to recognize, understand, study and enjoy nature and to realize what has been or will be lost if we don't take action in the present.

Activity Description

1. Along one wall or bulletin board, students create a time-line beginning with the time of settlement of your state to the present. Students research and place key events, inventions, births, etc., perhaps at 25 year intervals.
2. Begin by imagining what life might have been like for people living at key points. Students can read stories or use the internet to look up information on how people lived. It is the simple things like food, daily chores, housing materials, occupations, transportation, etc. that will seem the most changed.
3. Each student then chooses a time period to imagine themselves living in, and writes a journal entry about how life is then. Include details about the natural environment, species present, threatened or extinct. What was done to protect wild places and species?
4. Students can also write about how they are using a restoration site to preserve or recreate habitat and how that could impact the future.
5. Students read journal entries aloud to the class or display them around the classroom.

Extensions

Back in the Day...(cont.)

- Include hand-drawn, cut-out pictures or photographs of what is described in the journals.
- Students can pretend they are relatives of the future studying the past (our present) and they would like to know how life really was for people living in the twenty first century.

Students can also imagine how different life will be for people at the turn of the twenty-second century. They can think about food they might eat, clothes they might wear, transportation, hobbies and even where they will go to relax in nature.

Additional Resources

- Read, Write, Think. 07/06. Letter Generator. http://www.readwritethink.org/student_mat/student_material.asp?id=5
- Earth Change_Maps: Possible Future Landscapes. <http://healing.about.com/od/earthmaps/index.htm>

Assessments

- Older students can develop a rubric for the writing skills that should be displayed in the letter (i.e. punctuation, spelling, clarity, imagination, etc.) and then use it to grade themselves or a peer.