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# Land Use History Through Literature

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## Activity Overview

Students read and discuss historical fiction and nonfiction that explores the human experience in relation to land.

## Objectives

Students will:

- Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts to understand human experience in relation to the land
- Draw on a broad base of knowledge and insights found in literature
- Explore the difference between fiction and nonfiction

## Subjects Covered

Language Arts and Social Studies

## Grades

K through 12

## Activity Time

Varies

## Season

Any

## Materials

Historical literature that deals with Native American, explorer, and pioneer experiences with the land. A bibliography follows the activity.

## State Standards

### Language Arts:

Use effective reading strategies (A.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature (A.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Read & discuss texts to understand human experience (A.4.3, 8.3, 12.3)

Read to acquire information (A.4.4, 8.4, 12.4)

Orally communicate (C.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Listen & comprehend oral communications (C.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Participate in discussion (C.4.3, 8.3, 12.3)

## Background

Learning about the history of the land through literature broadens students' understanding of how native Americans, explorers, and pioneers lived and related to our native landscape. Students will begin to see their school's restored native landscape as more than an assemblage of plants, but as a piece of American culture. Through reading fictional or historical accounts of pioneers, settlers, and immigrants, students can experience the challenges, hardships, joys, and insights of living on an untamed landscape.

## Activity Description

Consider the following questions when reading your book:

- How did they care for and use the land?
- What were their beliefs and customs in respect to the land?
- Describe the land.
- How did the main character(s) or writer(s) feel about the land and why? Consider their viewpoint based on previous experiences, goals, and relation to the land.
- What plants and animals lived on the land, which ones were used for food or medicine?
- Are any of the plants described in the book growing in your restoration or could they be added?
- How is your restoration different from the land described in the book?

## Extensions

- After reading impressions, accounts and journals of early pioneers, write a fictional journal of a European settler or indigenous person.
- Write a letter from a new settler "back home" describing the new land.
- Write a new chapter based on the book you've read.
- Read a book selected from the Additional Resources, then make your own version for the school or community. Create versions that go forward or backward in time.
- As a class project design a display, write a skit, or compile quotes from your readings for a planting celebration day.
- Visit the local library or historical society to investigate the existence of diaries written by residents who lived in former times. Explore the difference between fiction and nonfiction.

## Additional Resources

- Anderson, W. (1998). *Pioneer girl: The story of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

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## Land History Through Literature (cont.)

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Develop vocabulary (D.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Interpret uses of language (D.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Conduct then communicate research (F.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

### Science:

Describe how science & technology help or hinder progress (H.4.1)

Show how science contributes to personal needs (H.4.3)

### Social Studies:

Identify & examine sources of information about history (B.4.1)

Use timelines to describe history (B.4.2)

Examine biographies (B.4.3)

Compare & contrast contemporary & historical lives (B.4.4)

Identify & examine historical events & people (B.4.7)

Explain history of WI Indian tribes (B.4.10)

Use & evaluate primary sources of information (B.8.1)

Identify significant historical events and people (B.8.7)

Summarize issues associated with WI Indian tribes (B.8.11)

Use criteria to organize and analyze history (B.8.12)

Analyze primary & secondary sources about historical event (B.12.1)

Analyze historical periods and relationships (B.12.3)

Analyze effects of significant changes (B.12.9)

Discuss impact of changes on beliefs & values (B.12.10)

Analyze history & status of WI Indian tribes (B.12.12)

- Baker, J. (1991). *Window*. New York, NY: Greenwillow.
- Benton-Banai, E. (1988). *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway. Red School House*. St. Paul, Minn: Indian Country Press.
- Brink, C. (1973) *Caddie Woodlawn*. New York, NY. Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Bunting, E. (1995). *Dandelions*. Orlando, FL. Harcourt Brace & Co.
- Bunting, E. (1996). *Train to somewhere*. New York, NY. Clarion Books.
- Conrad, P. (1985). *Prairie songs*. New York, NY: HarperTrophy.
- Erdrich, L. (1999). *The birchbark house*. New York, NY: Hyperion Paperbacks.
- Erdrich, L. (2005). *The game of silence*. New York, NY: HarperCollins
- Erdrich, L. (2008). *The porcupine year*. New York, NY: HarperCollins
- Goble, P. (1984). *Buffalo woman*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Ingalls Wilder, L. (1998). *Little house-series*. New York, NY: HarperTrophy
- Ingalls Wilder, L. (1971). *My first little house books-Series*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers
- Lawler, L. (1986). *Addie across the prairie*. New York, NY: Pocket Books. (Addie's Series)
- Lawler, L. (1993). *George on his own*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.
- Peyton, J. (1994). *The birch: Bright tree of life and legend*. Blacksburg, VA: The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company.
- Porter, G. (1991). *A girl of the Limberlost*. Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books.
- Rawlins, D. and Wheatly, N. (1998). *My place*. Brooklyn, NY: Kane/Miller Book Publishers.
- Speerstra, Karen. (1980). *The Earthshapers*. Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, Inc.
- Teale, E. (1957). *Dune boy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Brown, Dee. (1970). *Bury my heart at Wounded Knee*. Washington Square Press.

### Assessments

- Find three examples of a character's account of the landscape. Describe his/her attitude and concern for the land.
- Choose a character from your book. Do you think the character has a sense of stewardship towards the land, why or why not?
- Explain the difference between fiction and nonfiction historical accounts, use concrete examples.