

Lesson Plan

Theme: Where we are in place and time

Topic: South Texas History: From Prehistory to 1860's

Grade: 2nd

Teacher: Claudia Tijerina

Introduction

In this lesson, students will gain an understanding of the valley history and recognizing that the past is part of their culture. They will also be able to see that their own personal past is different than their family's past by conducting interviews to family members. Students will research on their own culture to make connections to their family's past.

Once they understand that history is made up of many people's stories of the past, students will explore how we know about events that occurred prior to our own births. Students will then research the history and events that are important in the development of the Rio Grande Valley. They will construct a timeline based on events from the local history so that it can give them a visual representation of the continuity of time.

Guiding Questions

- What is our family's past, and why is it important?
- How does culture influence our lives?
- How do we learn about events in the past?
- How do past events make our present in the Rio Grande Valley?

Learning Objectives

- 2.3A, B Understand how various sources provide information about the past and present
- 2.7A Understand how physical characteristics of places and regions affect people's activities and settlement patterns
- 2.2A create and interpret timelines for events in the past and the present
- 2.6B locate places of significance in a map, including the local community and Texas

Background

How did the Rio Grande Valley become what it is today? In 1749 the Nuevo Santander was founded. It was Spain who came into this land and gave it a name basing it on Santander, España. Around this time, the Spanish crowns sent soldiers, civilians and members of religious groups to take part in *entradas*, which were used to explore and settle the lands mid-way. By the end of 1790, the population in Nuevo Santander was of about 20,000 people, including Hispanics, which were mainly concentrated in the north of Nuevo Santander.

The king of Spain began to grant land of this Nuevo Santander. This land, or *porciones*, were long and narrow, this was mainly because they needed to have access to the river. The king would give out land to people who had served the crown, for example to the military or civilians. He would also give land to prominent families, which included Spaniards, Criollos, and Mestizos. Later on, this land was passed on from the patriarch to whoever he could designate, for example: a family member, Matriarch, or the widow.

Between 1821 and 1848 there was a brief Mexican period. During this time, the Spanish-Mexican vision was that of defense purposes in Nuevo Santander, while the Anglo-American vision was that of commercial. It was in 1848 that the Rio Grande was set as a boundary between the United States and Mexico. This was a period of conquest, colonization and cooperation.

The battle of Palo Alto occurred before war had been declared between the United States and Mexico. The battle took place on May 8, 1846, the U.S. Congress declared war on May 13. It was the first major engagement of the Mexican War, was fought north of Brownsville on May 8, 1846, between American forces under Gen. Zachary Taylor and Mexican troops commanded by Gen. Mariano Arista. The battle was fought for the territory on the north side of the Rio Grande River. After the war, the U.S. declared victory.

On the Rio Grande, the great boom in steam navigation came during the war with Mexico in 1846 (Mexican-American War). The war had demonstrated the practicalities of steamboat navigation on the Rio Grande, and several businessmen established themselves quickly in the trade. Steam navigation, at least on a small scale, would endure on the Rio Grande for sixty years, longer than on any other major Texas waterway.

By 1850, most of the people were ranchers. At this time, there were about 25,000 Mexican and Mexican American in Texas. Which out of that population, 5500 were concentrated in Laredo and over the Rio Grande Valley. Most owners of livestock were Tejanos or Mexican Immigrants. Women were also ranchers.

Around the late 1800's and early 1900's there was a great development in the Rio Grande Valley. The irrigation for crops was introduced and the railroad was built. This brought in, and attracted people to the valley, from farmers to workers in the fields. But during this time, also many people lost their land, mainly those who could not keep up with all the changes going on. It was during this time that the valley was called the "Magic Valley" and it was basically to attract settlers and investors.

It was around this time, that people who owned *porciones* started selling parts of them, or separating them. The land started getting a higher value and people bought them, basically for farming. This land was then worked mainly by *brazeros* or immigrants. Usually, the immigrants came from many parts of Mexico and South America to work the land. The owners would sometimes provide these workers with a temporary place to stay with their families while working for them. Most of these workers would come and look for work at the farms, stay while there was work, and then leave until the season of planting came again. Some owners of these lands then started either subdividing or selling the land, until most of them were left with very little or none at all, they would just keep the land where they had their houses on.

Now a days, the Rio Grande Valley is big economic region. It is home to many ethnicities, including Anglos, Hispanics, and African-American, along with others. Jobs and education are just some of the important things that the valley offers.

Preparation

Review the suggested activities, then download and duplicate maps, timelines, handouts (for lapbooks, etc.), and any online materials you will need. If desired, you can bookmark specific web pages so that students can access relevant online materials directly; print out required pages and duplicate copies as necessary for student viewing. Have colored paper or construction paper ready to make foldables (suggested but not required) for the various activities on the lesson plan.

Lesson Activities

Activity 1: Interviews

Duration: 1 week

Explain that the past means things that have already happened. Ask someone to tell an event from yesterday's history. Next, ask students to relate events from last year. Once all students seem to understand the meaning of "the past," ask for a few students to tell an event from when they were babies. Do they remember these events? If not, how do they know about them?

Refer back to the events from yesterday that have been listed. Just as the class has a history, each family also has an important history made up of events from the past. Have students brainstorm some events in their families' histories. Examples might include births, deaths, marriages, immigrations, graduations, vacations, bar/bat mitzvahs, adoptions, moves, opening of a family business, etc. Be sure to reinforce that every family is different, and therefore, every family will have different events in its past that make up its history.

Tell students that they will be conducting an interview to one of their family members. It will be either a grandparent or their own parents. In the interview they will annotate how their grandparents/parents lived when they were small and as they were growing up. It will include, where they lived, any games they played, what did they use to eat, where they went to school, etc. This interview will be recorded on a little book (foldable) that they will create. They can include pictures in this book (suggested but not required).

Activity 2: My own culture

Duration: 1 week

Before students learn about the history of the Rio Grande, they need to first identify themselves by describing their own culture. By doing this, they will be able to make connections to the culture of the valley.

Students will create a foldable where they will describe something about their culture. This can be religion, celebrations, traditions, etc. It will be a take home project and be finished in the classroom to be presented.

Activity 3: Local history

Duration: 3 weeks

Students will learn about the history of the Rio Grande Valley from prehistory to 1860's. Students will learn by reading articles, doing research, and watching some videos.

Students will create a timeline of these important events (Prehistory –mosasaur, mammoth, Coahuiltecans, Palo Alto Battle, Steam boats in the Rio Grande River).

Activity 4: Palo Alto Battle

Teachers, grade level, will schedule an appointment to have the park rangers of the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park to come and make a presentation at the school about the battle at Palo Alto as the beginning of the Mexican-American War and explain the history on how this battle influenced the territory of what is now Texas.

Students will get a hands-on experience on what really happened on the battlefield. Park rangers will interact with them and provide various activities to check for student understanding.

Assessment

Formative: Students will create foldables for interviews and culture. Students will be tested with weekly multiple choice tests for the history that will be covered to check for understanding. They will also create a lapbook where they will organize all the information gathered from interviews, culture and history.

Summative: After having done the interviews, reflected on their own culture and learned about the local history, students will choose one event and connect it to how that event may contribute to their own culture. They will write a composition and create a diorama of that event.

Skills

- Critical thinking
- Gathering, classifying and interpreting written, oral and visual information
- Historical analysis
- Interpretation
- Interview skills
- Literary analysis
- Making inferences and drawing conclusions
- Synthesis

Resources

Books:

“Primary Source Accounts of the Mexican-American War” by James M. Deen

“The Mexican American War” by Matthew Kachur, Jon Sterngass

Links:

Nuevo Santander history –

<http://vsalgs.org/stnemgenealogy/tamaul.html>

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/article/usnue>

The Mexican-American War

<http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/mexicanwar.htm>

Steamboats

<http://riverboatdaves.com/areas/riogrande-2.html>

Early Ranching In South Texas

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/st-plains/images/ne14.html>

Presentations:

Dr. Sonia Hernandez History Power Point Presentation