

What Makes Our Community Special?

Karen M. Ortiz
Northside Elementary
Montrose, Colorado

OVERVIEW

Students will learn the qualities that define a small town or city. They will use the *Doing History/Keeping the Past* materials as a springboard from which they can form generalizations and determine what makes their community unique. A concept web (computer or paper and pencil) class and electronic presentation are suggested products.

STANDARDS

- History Standard 2.2: Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of information.
- Geography Standard 6.1: Students know how to apply geography to understand the past.
- Reading and Writing Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- describe how places and environments may have influenced people and events over time
- identify the main idea in a source of historical information
- choose content specific vocabulary to communicate clearly and precisely
- organize nonfiction information using a graphic organizer
- create an electronic or written presentation based upon the information they've learned or their community's unique customs and celebrations

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- What types of activities do communities engage in that make them special and develop a sense of pride in their citizens?
- Do smaller communities have similar activities that define their town as cities do?
- What purpose does a specific community activity serve (e.g. recognize a culture, showcase a unique product or lifestyle, pride, etc.)?
- How do children play a role in community activities? Is that role the same as for adults?

MATERIALS TO BE USED

- *Doing History/ Keeping the Past* CD-ROM disk or website Cities theme, all Community Life topics
- a computer drawing or painting program (*Word* or *ClarisWorks Draw*) or software such as *Inspiration*, a tool to create graphic organizers
- presentation software such as *HyperStudio* or *KidPix*, etc. and digital camera if desired
- primary sources from the *Cities in Colorado* Teacher's Notebook which correspond to the different subtopics:

SUBTOPIC	PHOTO(S)	PRIMARY SOURCE
CHURCHES	ALL	<i>An Early Denver Church, First Church Service in Denver</i>
		<i>A Church Service in Denver, 1867, Church Services</i>
		<i>African Methodist Episcopal Church, Denver's Methodist Church</i>
HOLIDAYS & FESTI	1	<i>Christmas in Denver, 1859, An Early Christmas in Denver</i>
		<i>Christmas Fruit Cakes, Christmas Tree Decorations</i>
	3 & 4	<i>The Festival of the Mountain and Plain</i>
SPORTS	4	<i>High School Football</i>
ENTERTAINMENT	1	<i>An Early Denver Theater, Tabor Grand Opera House</i>
		<i>Performing at Denver's Apollo Theater</i>
	3	<i>The Elitch's Garden Theater, A Movie at Elitch's Gardens</i>
	6	<i>First Movie in Denver</i>

PROCEDURE

1. Begin with the Essential Question, "What kinds of activities make a community special?" Web student ideas on the board, chart paper, or computer program using colored markers to color code answers into categories. Use the same mode as the student created concept web as a model of your expectations.
2. Have students research Community Life using the CD-ROM disk or website. Stress the use of specific vocabulary in their note taking. (Options used are based upon the number of computers and other management variables):
 - Classroom computer pod: A small group of students or an individual can research at the pod while other students are researching using other materials (literature, nonfiction books, etc.) or during Writers' Workshop while others are engaged in other activities;
 - Classroom with projection device: Students view the photos as a whole class while teacher models process of note-taking, site navigation, etc.;
 - Lab setting; independent or paired research directly from the website or CD-ROM disk;
 - No classroom computers: print hard copies of the photos and text for students to use.
3. Students may also read primary sources during a Language Arts block to

enrich their understanding and the precision of their vocabulary.

4. Have students use their notes to create a web which demonstrates their understanding (paper & colored pencil or computer generated).
5. Students may be divided into groups based upon the subtopics to create an electronic presentation about their community's uniqueness. It could be structured so each subtopic may be a "page." Digital photos of significant places and events can be taken during the year or scanned images collected from the children's home could be imported into the presentation.

Extensions:

1. Have the students use the Twentieth Century theme, Community Life photos and text to compare and contrast with those studied in Cities.
2. Students could produce a commercial, tourists' brochure, or newspaper ad showcasing their community's unique celebrations and customs.

ASSESSMENT

- Formal Assessment: Use the attached grading sheets to assess the student products.