

Build a Model of Main Street Then and Now

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OVERVIEW

To have students understand, appreciate, and document how the Main Street in their town has changed over time. In groups of 2-3, students will become "experts" on a particular historical building or place. As a class, students will create two models of their town: one of the past and one of the present. Students will work cooperatively to build the models and to write a brief caption explaining the historical uses of their building or place.

STANDARDS

- History Standard 2.2: Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of information.
- Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Locate historical photographs of their city
- Make sketches from a photograph of a historic building or place and then photograph the same in the present
- Research the history of their building by conducting interviews with residents, employees, owners and/or by analyzing available materials at the local historical society or library
- Write an expository caption explaining the history of their building or place

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- How was the building/place used in the past?
- How has the building/place's use changed over time?
- How is it used today? Has it been preserved? How and why?
- How has the building/place physically changed over time?
- Which buildings are still there? Which ones are not?
- What do we preserve and why?
- Is Main Street used the same way today?
- Is there another part of town that is more popular today (a mall or new downtown area)?
- What do we want to preserve of our town?

MATERIALS TO BE USED

- For historical photographs and information about your community's main street, contact your local library and Historical Society. The Denver Public Library has a great web site from which you can print photographs (www.denver.lib.co.us).
- The Doing History/Keeping the Past CD-ROM or Project web site.

PROCEDURE

1. Talk with students about historical preservation. What should be preserved and why? What would they like to save from their own lives? What have their parents and grandparents saved? Why are these things valuable? What do they tell us about the past?
2. On the CD-ROMs (the Georgetown virtual field trip and the mining towns and farming and ranching market towns topics), have groups of students look for examples of "main streets." What do they notice about them? How are they similar to each other? How are they similar to your town's Main Street?
3. Take a field trip to your town's Main Street or use a map in the classroom. In groups of 2-3, students choose buildings or places that they would like to research. (Possible sites might include a train depot, post office, general store, school, jail, or park. You should do some preliminary research so that you can make suggestions to students and have some resources available.)
4. Students will need to sketch or photograph each side of the building in both the past and the present in order to make a 3 dimensional model for each. To do this, make sure that the sketch or photograph of each side is made from the same distance away and that verticals are vertical and horizontals are horizontal--tall buildings may not work. (If you can't sketch or photograph all sides, just reverse the negative of the side you can reach and make a print for the other side.) The photos and sketches should be the same size (for example, 5 x 7 or 8 x 10).
5. Paste the faces to cardboard or poster board and then cut out each view before assembling the building using scraps as hinges. Then students will need to make a roof.
6. Assemble the buildings into the town models (past and present), complete with street names, geographic features, railroad tracks, etc.
7. Based on their research, students write captions explaining the different uses of the building over time.

8. Display the models with historical captions for others to enjoy and learn from (at school, local library, etc.).

EXTENSIONS

1. What do we want to preserve for the future? Maybe it's part of Main Street or maybe it's another part of town. Why should this be preserved? What will it tell future generations about our culture? How can we preserve it?