



Lesson Plans

This unit explores U.S. communities in a historical context. By exploring their own community's buildings and services of both long ago and today, children are introduced to concepts of change, continuity and geography in a local, immediately tangible context. The books for this unit provide thematic structure; lessons begin with picture books that introduce a community history concept. Students then further explore the theme using local sources and creative activities.

Throughout the unit and reinforcing the concepts of change and continuity, students construct a timeline depicting their local community's development, beginning with original Native American settlements and continuing to the present. The timeline may be constructed gradually in a day-by-day process that mirrors the class's progress through the unit. At the conclusion of designated activities, photos or other resources from that lesson may be added to the timeline, in simple sections labeled "long, long ago", "long ago" and "today".

Because this unit is designed for implementation using local resources, particularly historic photographs of the community, teachers may wish to consult a research guide for locating and identifying local history sources. M. Gail Hickey's **Bringing History Home: Local and family history projects for grades K-6** (1999), is an excellent, teacher-friendly resource. In the context of elementary-age lesson planning, Hickey explains the research process from identifying local archives to choosing suitable documents for the classroom. Where state or local landmarks are described, substitute your local themes for those listed here.

Activity 1: Long, Long Ago – Native Americans Lived Here First

Content Goals:

- ❖ Students are introduced to the concept Native peoples of specific tribes once lived (and may live still) where the present-day community stands.
- ❖ In Washington, children learn the loway and Meskwakie tribes once lived across the country that is now Iowa.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Students listen to read-aloud history stories
- ❖ Students retell a story
- ❖ Students draw to express knowledge

Centerpiece:

- ❖ **Right Here on This Spot** (Clapp & Addy, 1999), **I is for Iowa People** (Gensicke & Nachtigal, 2001).



Content:

- ❖ Non-native American communities are built in places where native tribes once lived. The Ioway and Meskwakie were two prominent tribes in Iowa. The Meskwakie still live as a tribe in Tama, Iowa.

Process:

- ❖ Teacher reads **Right Here on This Spot**. Students are encouraged to “re-tell” the story, either through a structured activity or through informal discussion.

Example Re-telling activity: Divide students into groups. Each group is given a large sheet of paper or poster board and is assigned one of the themes or pages from the story to illustrate on the paper. When finished, the groups go in order to share their poster, with group members taking turns to describe their contribution to the illustrations.

- ❖ Teacher reads Ioway and Meskwakie selections from **I is for Iowa People**
- ❖ Class discusses Native Americans. Have the students heard of Native Americans or American Indians?
 - Do the students know Native Americans personally?
 - What do the students know about Native Americans?
 - Did the students know a tribe(s) once lived in this area?

Activities:

- ❖ Activity – students imagine and draw a picture of what the country where their town is located looked like before the town was built. Questions to guide their ideas for drawing:
 - What does the country outside town look like now? If you think about our book, **Right Here on This Spot**, what do you think the place where our town now stands looked like long, long ago? (If you live in an agricultural area, you may wish to talk about large-scale farming, that it came with town settlements. Ask students to imagine farmed fields as fields of grass, or in some cases, timber that was cleared. You may also discuss that various native tribes cultivated crops but in smaller plots than farmers today.)
 - Were there houses and stores?
 - Were there streets and sidewalks?
 - Were there businesses and restaurants?
 - Did people live here? Who?

(This activity should be adapted with materials about your own home state/town, and available information about the tribes originally in your area.)



Product:

- ❖ Student's pictures of your town's area long, long ago.
- ❖ Pictures are posted on the "Our community" timeline under long, long ago.

Resources:

- ❖ **Right Here on This Spot**
- ❖ **I is for Iowa People**

Activity 2: Non-Native Settlers

Content Goals:

- ❖ Students learn about non-native settlers, how they traveled to areas new to them to start new communities.
- ❖ Students learn towns provided things people needed to survive.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Listening to read aloud
- ❖ Story re-telling
- ❖ Conjecture – making a connection between a story and a subsequent consequence.

Centerpiece:

- ❖ **Aurora Means Dawn** (Sanders & Kastner, 1989).

Content:

- ❖ Students learn long, long ago settlers traveled by wagon. They learn that before communities or towns were built, settlers often lived lonely lives in isolated areas.

Process:

- ❖ Class reads and re-tells **Aurora Means Dawn**
- ❖ Discussion:
 - When a number of people settled in Aurora, what do you think they built in their town?
 - What would the people settling in Aurora have needed in their new town?



Activity

- ❖ Children draw a picture of one thing they think would have been in Aurora once it became a town. Suggested discussion for this activity: What kinds of things might have been in the town of Aurora long ago? (Children may place modern institutions, such as water slides and fast-food restaurants, in the town. If this is the case, explain these things did not yet exist long ago.)

Product:

- ❖ Children's pictures of Aurora

Resources:

- ❖ **Aurora Means Dawn**

Activity 3: Building a Town

Content Goal:

- ❖ Children learn what their town looked like long ago.
- ❖ Children learn their town changes over time.
- ❖ Children learn some things stay almost the same.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Photo analysis

Centerpiece:

- ❖ **Since 1920** (Wallner, 1992), Photos of your town's downtown long ago and today

Content:

- ❖ Some things in communities change and some stay the same over time

Process:

- ❖ Read aloud **Since 1920**
- ❖ Students look at photos of their downtown long ago and today. (Photos taken today should be taken as close to the same original position as possible to clearly demonstrate continuity and change.)



Product:

- ❖ Several photos may be posted in the “Long ago” and “Today” timeline categories.

Resources:

- ❖ Since 1920
- ❖ Photos of your town center long ago and today. Long ago photos may be found in local archives or in a county history book, if one was ever created.

Activity 4: Your Community Long Ago and Today

Content Goals:

- ❖ Children learn various community services, such as police, fire protection, and the library, have been a part of the town for a long time.
- ❖ Children learn what those services looked like long ago and today.

Process Goals:

- ❖ Photo analysis

Centerpiece:

- ❖ On the Town (Caseley, 2002), photos of your schools, postal service, sheriff, fire station, pharmacy, etc., long ago and today.

Content:

- ❖ Using On the Town as a template for comparison, students study parallel institutions in their own town.

Process:

- ❖ Class reads On the Town
 - Students view historic and current photographs of their town’s institutions that parallel the institutions showcased in On the Town.

Activities:

- ❖ Students make models of their town both long ago and today. They may draw on butcher paper or make 3-D models by decorating shoeboxes or cereal boxes. Students may paste actual photos onto boxes or draw and color their own town square, postal wagon, fire station, etc. This is a wide-open activity – it essentially takes the place of a mind map, a way for students to review all



they've learned in the unit. When complete, the town models make fun play sets to use with action figure toys.

- ❖ Extension read aloud book

Long Ago (Emmer, R.; 1999, Newbridge Emergent Readers Series.)

Product:

- ❖ Town models
- ❖ Photos of the town models may be posted in the long ago and today timeline categories.

Resources:

- ❖ Historic and recent photos of your town
- ❖ Paper, boxes, markers, glue for building town models