

Preserving Community History

Summary

Each Utah community has a fascinating story. Historic buildings, monuments, sites, and parks remind citizens and visitors of a shared history and culture. Studying, preserving, and documenting local history allows students to connect the present to the past and experience pride in sharing their unique heritage.

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Materials

Personal artifact

Photographs: [Brigham City](#)

- [Story of Spring City](#)

Photograph: [Spring City](#)

Clipboards, pencils, paper, cameras

Photographs and description of: [Hidden Hollow and the State Penitentiary \(Sugar House\)](#) and photographs and student displays of [smelter smokestacks \(Murray\)](#)

- *Deseret News*

article: ["Water Walk, Town Square to honor St. George's past"](#)

- *Deseret News*

article: [Midvale Museum](#)

Background for Teachers

Enduring Understanding

Students will understand that each municipality has a unique history. Identifying and preserving local stories, important historic buildings, and relics from the past enrich the community in many ways.

Essential Questions

What historic buildings, places, and stories are unique to our community?

In what ways do the present city reflect the culture and history of its early residents?

In what ways might we honor the history of our community?

Objectives

Students will study the ways in which several Utah communities have made decisions regarding historic structures. Students will consider ways in which they might identify, preserve, and share the rich culture and history of their own city or town.

Instructional Procedures

Setting the Stage

Bring an object from home that has special meaning to you and your family. (Example: a grandparent's tool, an object passed down from past generations.)

Show the object. Ask students: "How was the object valuable to its original owners in the past? In what ways is it still valuable today?"

Invite students to describe historic artifacts that are kept and valued by their own families. Ask: "Why do people save artifacts when they are no longer practical or useful?" (They remind people of earlier times, important people, and are ties to the past.)

Discuss how a family might feel if these artifacts are lost. Discuss the ways in which historic artifacts, monuments, and stories create community pride and bond people together.

Activity: Community History

Explain that communities are like families. Both have artifacts, buildings, and stories that reflect their history and remind present citizens of their unique past.

Display historic and present day photographs of Brigham City and compare and contrast the photos. Ask students to look for clues that show ways in which the city has changed and (or) has remained the same.

Discuss the reasons why Brigham City might have kept the original sign and many old buildings instead of replacing them with more modern structures.

Activity: Spring City

Explain that communities have stories to tell. Ask students to list ways in which people remember the past. (Recording stories from older neighbors, writing in journals, collecting photographs, recognizing historic sites with monuments, preserving historic buildings, etc.)

Read "[Spring City](#)" as a class or in small groups. Explain that the citizens made a unique decision. They decided to preserve many old structures so that the city would continue to look much like an original pioneer community.

Discuss "Spring City" and answer the questions.

Activity: Making Decisions

Ask students: "Should all old buildings be saved?" Explain that saving old buildings is not always the right decision for a community. Sometimes it is necessary to change to make room for community growth. Change is always hard, and leaders must make difficult decisions which balance tradition with new changes.

Share personal and student stories describing time of necessary change as well as situations that value tradition.

Explain that community leaders must continually decide whether to restore or destroy historic buildings or places to make way for community growth. Leaders make these decisions by asking questions such as: (1) Is the building unique or important? (2) Can the building remain useful to the present community? (3) Does the cost of restoring the building make economic sense? (4) How important is the building to the citizens? (5) Will saving the building best meet the needs of the community? (6) Can the building be restored?

Divide students into groups. Distribute pictures and descriptions of [Hidden Hollow, the monument to the Utah Penitentiary, the Murray City monument and student Murray City "floats,"](#) and the [Deseret News article](#). Discuss the varied ways in which each group preserved the site or a memorial to the site. Students will summarize each article with the class.

Divide students into "citizen groups." Give each group an activity sheet.

Assign each "citizen group" to: (1) Read about a historic structure. (2) Sketch an imaginary picture of their assigned structure. (3) Think and record reasons for both restoring and destroying the structure. (4) Present their stories, drawings, and reasons to the class.

Instruct the class to act as a city council while listening to each presentation.

Allow the city council (class) to consider the preservation questions and to vote on whether the structure will remain.

Ask students to think of ways in which the historic landmark might be remembered if the class decides to remove it.

Activity: Honoring Local History

Assign students to learn about the historic events, people, or structures in their community. (Resources might include: municipality Internet home pages, local historical groups, local museums, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Utah Heritage Foundation, Utah Historical Society, phone calls to city leaders, guest historians, personal or community photos, etc.)

Encourage students to study and report on specific local historical sites, artifacts, people, or buildings.

Extensions

Invite historians to share stories and photos with the class.

Take field trips to historic sites and study, photograph, and sketch the site.

Write articles to publish in a classroom "Community History" book or for the local newspaper or school newsletter.

Create a map and brochure to educate others about the unique sites found in the community.

Discuss ways in which to honor historic people or structures that are important and yet might be forgotten.

Bibliography

This lesson plan is part of the Utah League of Cities and Towns [This Must be Utah! A Teacher's Guide to Utah Cities and Towns](#)

Author: Sheri Sohm

Editor: Sydney Fonnesebeck , Director of Training

Utah League of Cities and Towns

Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](#)