

Describing the Character of Louisiana Purchase Louisianians

Designed by:

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Introduction

Ever wonder how a person who lives outside of Louisiana would describe you? What would he note about your appearance, intellect, dress, food, customs, the way you speak? This lesson is about the character of Louisianians as observed by Major Amos Stoddard of Philadelphia. Stoddard was sent to Louisiana soon after the Purchase in 1803 to record his observations of the “character of the Louisiana people.” Stoddard’s descriptions of the Louisianians he observed was published in 1812.

Content Area and Grade Levels

This lesson on Louisiana Purchase Louisianians: A Character Sketch, is anchored in Social Studies and is intended for use by high school students(grades 9-12).

Curriculum Standards

Louisiana Curriculum Standards to be addressed in this lesson are:

Geography

*G-1B-H2 Analyzing the ways in which physical and human characteristics of places and regions have affected historic events

*G-1B-H4 Explaining and evaluating the importance of places and regions to cultural identity

History

*H-1A-H3 Interpreting and evaluating the historical evidence presented in primary and secondary sources

*H-1A-H5 Conducting research in efforts to analyze historical questions and issues

Implementation Overview

This lesson is to be implemented in correlation with a unit on the Exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. The primary activity of the lesson involves students, working in groups of 3-5, to research, read, and create brief character sketches of a typical Louisianian at the time of the Louisiana Purchase. Students will use primary source information furnished via the internet by the LSU Digital Library. Each group must present its findings to the class using their choice of a variety of

techniques: oral presentation, research summary with visual aids, or “group skit” method in which group members share what they have learned from their research by role playing for the class.

Estimated project time: 3-4 1-hour class periods.

Resources Needed:

1. Internet access to download primary source period information from LSU Digital Library.
2. Stoddard, Amos. *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana*. (Philadelphia: Published by Mathew Carey. A. Small, printer, 1812). Available through the LSU Digital Library at <http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/u/?lapur,10968>.

Entry Level Skills and Knowledge

Other than grade level reading and writing skills, the student does not need prior knowledge of the culture of the people of Louisiana. The lesson is quite easy to implement as the teacher serves as the tour guide providing direction for student internet research and analysis.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following:

1. Did the student work efficiently in his/her group?
2. Did the student follow all directions?
3. Did the student create an accurate character sketch of early 19th century Louisianians?
4. Did the student participate in and perform satisfactory research that was shared with the entire class?

Conclusion

After the lesson, teacher should lead a class discussion about the importance and relevance of the project. Ask students if they think Major Stoddard did an adequate job of describing Louisianians. Did Stoddard’s work reveal any cultural bias or stereotyping? Would this description of the character of Louisianians be considered “politically correct” today? These are just a few examples of questions to ask your high school students.