“Connecting to the Past:  
A Case Study on MacArthur Park and the Westlake Area of Los Angeles”

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GRADES  6 Humanities and Journalism

INTRODUCTION
This lesson will help sixth grade humanities students as well as middle school journalism students explore, investigate, and report on their neighborhood, the Westlake area of Los Angeles, using a variety of media. The goal is to help students connect and analyze the past history of their neighborhood and understand how that history has changed and impacts their lives in 2007.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS
World History and Geography
6.1.2 Identify the locations of human communities that populated the major regions of the world and describe how humans adapted to a variety of environments.

Reading Comprehension
6.2.2 Identify the structural features of popular media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, online information) and features to obtain information.

6.2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports.

Research and Technology
6.1.4 Use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., databases, keyword searches) to locate information.

Writing Applications
6.2.2 Write expository compositions using comparison and contrast.

6.2.3 Write research reports.

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Sponsors
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MATERIALS (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY)

1. The Ancient World textbook
2. Various books on historical Los Angeles
3. Various photos from the Auto Club and other sources
4. Articles from Westways Magazine
5. Historical and current maps from the Auto Club
6. Digital cameras
7. Video cameras
8. Computers
9. Social Studies journals

PREPARATION

1. Set up PowerPoint presentation on archaeology and historical Los Angeles.
2. Copy student packet of various maps and articles.
3. Make and pass out student permission slips for neighborhood tour.
4. Contact various experts and owners to schedule days and times for visits to historical places of interest.
5. Charge up batteries for cameras.
6. Reserve computer cart.

ACTIVITY

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson with the essential question, “How do we know about the past, and what tools can we use to gain knowledge and understanding about the past 100 years ago? 1000 years ago? 1,000,000 years ago? After discussion, the instructor will present a PowerPoint presentation on archaeology and a brief view of the students’ neighborhood in the Westlake/MacArthur Park area. Key vocabulary terms and names will be introduced, including: history, prehistory, artifact, evidence, documentation, archaeologist, oral tradition, Henry Wilshire, and General Douglas MacArthur.
ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

2. Students will then study and discuss within their cooperative groups an Auto Club map of the Westlake district from 1930. An Auto Club map from 2007 will then be handed out which will lead to a discussion of similarities and differences between the two maps. Students should be able to identify that what is now MacArthur Park was called Westlake Park, and that it had one large lake without Wilshire Boulevard splitting it into two. The teacher will then assign one historical place of interest to each cooperative group. Each group will be responsible for a PowerPoint/imovie presentation on their historical place. The students will be shown examples and given a rubric so they know what is required before they go on their archaeological adventure. The historical places are: the Park View Hotel/Elks Club, Westlake Theater, Belmont Tunnel and Toluca Substation, Alvarado Theater, MacArthur Park, and Lafayette Park.

3. The following day the students will go on a walking tour with their Social Studies journals and digital and video cameras. Each cooperative group of archaeologists will be responsible for documenting their historical place of interest by taking notes, drawing maps, sketching details, and taking pictures and videos.

4. The students will next research their historical place using the Internet, Wikipedia (with guidance), magazine articles, books, and maps. Using all the resources, cooperative groups will be given plenty of time to put together their PowerPoint/imovie presentations in class. In addition to the presentation, students will add and/or edit an article about their historical place on Wikipedia with documentation. At the end of the project each cooperative group will present their findings and evidence in the PowerPoint/imovie presentation as well as their article and photo in Wikipedia.

ASSESSMENT

Each cooperative group will be assessed using a 20-point rubric for the PowerPoint/imovie presentation and another rubric for the Wikipedia article.

EXTENSION

The students who are also in Journalism will write an article with photos of one historical place in the Westlake area for each issue of the Dragon Times. The articles will be in the form of a compare-and-contrast expository composition.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

TEXTS AND INTERNET PUBLICATIONS
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MacArthur_Park
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westlake%2c_Calif

MAGAZINES AND MAPS
Street Map of the City of Los Angeles (Los Angeles: Automobile Club of Southern California, 1930.
“MacArthur Park”, Westways, (June 1965) :9

PHOTOS AND POSTCARDS
Westlake, Los Angeles, Auto Club of Southern California-Photos # 205-6 and 205-10;
click onto the words below to download and print these images.
  1. Westlake photo #1
  2. Westlake photo #2
Photos #205-5 and 248-3 are available at the USC Digital Archive.
205-5—Temple Street across Alvarado, Los Angeles
http://digarc.usc.edu/assetserver/controller/view/search/AAA-EN-205-5

248-3—Intersection of 6th and Commonwealth Avenue, Los Angeles, 1925
http://digarc.usc.edu/assetserver/controller/view/search/AAA-EN-248-3

Dickerson, Brent, A Visit to Old Los Angeles and Environ.
Postcards at http://www.csulb.edu/~odinthor/socal13.html

APPENDIX

COPIES OF POSTCARDS
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Geographic Literacy


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