

# Somewhere, USA: Creating a Community, Part III

## Lesson Overview

This lesson is designed to teach how places change with emphasis on the human-environment interactions (adapting to local conditions, using local resources and modifying the environment) in different time periods. The students will read stories about Native Americans and early settlers in their region and draw pictures on what their imaginary community (completed in Parts I and II of the lesson) must have looked like. Then they will discuss the changes that have occurred and the human-environment interactions in their imaginary community at the present time.

## Grade Level

Primary

## Duration

1-3 class periods

## Geography Theme

Relationships Within Places: Humans and Environments

- Includes how people adapt to and change the environment
- Includes how people depend on the environment

Regions

- Regions change

## Geography Standards

The geographically informed person knows and understands...

- (#14) how human actions modify the physical environment.
- (#15) how physical systems affect human systems.
- (#17) how to apply geography to interpret the past.

## Materials Needed

For Teacher:

- Books about natural vegetation, Native Americans in the local region, and early settlement of Europeans
- Transparency showing the local community before settlement

For Students:

- Drawing paper, crayons
- Books about local history of the region (Optional)

## Main Objectives of the Lesson

Students are expected to:

1. identify ways that people have adapted to the environment over time;
2. identify ways that people in the past and present modify or change the environment to meet their needs;
3. compare ways that people use the local resources in the past and present.

## Suggested Teaching Procedure

### Preparing for the Lesson

1. You will utilize the bulletin board (or floor) map of the imaginary community developed by the class in Parts I and II. Prepare a transparency showing what the region looked like without any humans: put in the hills, ponds, rivers. Do research on what the natural vegetation was before human habitation changed it in your local area. Find early pictures of the area to show the class. Obtain a book with pictures about the Native Americans who lived in the area and another about early European settlement.

### Opening the Lesson

1. Ask the students to imagine what the area on their community map might have looked like before people came to build a community. Ask the students to tell you what they think it must have been like: what things on their map were already there and what things were there then that are no longer there. Expect hills, ponds, and rivers, vegetation and wildlife to have been there and forests to have disappeared. If you have found pictures of the natural vegetation of the area, show them to the class. Talk about how the natural grasses and trees are different from what is there now. Put your transparency map on the overhead and add trees and grasses to it.

### Developing the Lesson

1. Ask the students to speculate about the first humans to inhabit this area.
2. Read a story about the Native Americans that lived in the area. Discuss how the Native Americans used the local resources (hunting, fishing, gathering, using the soil for crops), adapted to the climate and modified the land (building villages, removing trees, burning the grasses).
3. Ask students to speculate about people who came to the area after the Native Americans. Suggest that many people came from eastern United States or from Europe. If they were farmers (adapt to your area) originally, they often did the same things when they moved. The community might have been a small village with a store, church and so forth. If you have any books showing early settlement in the region, show the pictures to the class, read a story. Ask how these settlers adapted to and modified the local environment and how they used the local resources.
4. Have the students draw pictures showing either the Native Americans in the region before Europeans came, or early European settlers in the region. Have them include at least one physical feature from the community map (the lake, river, hill or whatever) in their picture. Post the pictures around the room, one place for Native American settlement, another for early European settlement.

### Concluding the Lesson

1. Conclude the lesson by bringing the students back to the present time. Discuss with the class the following questions:
  - How has the area changed since the Native Americans and early settlers lived here?
  - How do the present day people use the resources of the area? (Depending on your local area you may have answers such as, use the land for building houses and stores, use the lake and/or river for recreation and drinking water, use the hills for sledding in the winter, plant gardens for vegetables and fruit.) Compare resources uses that are similar and different from uses long ago.
  - How do people today adapt to the environment? (Elicit answers such as they use warm clothing in winter, they grow vegetables that will grow in our climate, they build bridges over the rivers and streams, and they build houses that will be warm in winter.)

- How do people today modify the environment? (Elicit answers such as they build houses on land once used for farming, they dredge the river to make it deeper for boats, they flatten the land to build an airport, and the like.)

## **Extending the Lesson**

1. Students could create dioramas to illustrate their region during occupation by Native Americans and later by settlers in the 1800's.
2. Give the students an opportunity to make changes to their imaginary community. This could include adding additional buildings or removing something and putting in something else. Discuss the impact of the changes on the environment. Make sure the class agrees before making the changes. If the students have individual maps of the community, they should make changes on their maps.