

Establishing the Grand Canyon National Park in the Progressive Era

DURATION

75 to 90 minutes

LOCATION

Classroom

KEY VOCABULARY

1. National Park: a natural area with designated boundaries defining its perimeter deemed to be public property and reserved and preserved for purposes of recreation and enjoyment.
2. Progressive Movement: a reform movement to cure many of the ills of American society that had developed during the great spurt of industrial growth in the last quarter of the 19th century and into the 20th century, reaching its peak in 1912
3. Activism: policy or action of using vigorous and diverse means of campaigning to bring about political or social change
4. Conserve: To protect and use wisely to minimize waste and to expand the maximum benefit for all concerned
5. Preserve: To keep safe from harm and destruction
6. Organic Act: Legislative Act of 1916 establishing the National Park Service
7. Antiquities Act: Legislative Act of 1906 which strove to protect “any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity” on federal lands, providing the president with the authority to declare national monuments those historic landmarks which he deemed worthy.

TRUNK MATERIALS

- “Establishing National Parks in the Progressive Era” PowerPoint presentation on CD-ROM

Master Copies of:

- PowerPoint Notes sheet
- Antiquities Act of 1906
- Organic Act of 1916
- Primary Source Analysis Worksheet
- Excerpt from *Steep Trails* by John Muir

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS (NOT SUPPLIED)

- Access to a computer and projector
- Butcher paper
- Colored markers or crayons

Copies of the following for each student:

- PowerPoint Notes sheet
- Antiquities Act of 1906
- Organic Act of 1916
- Primary Source Analysis Worksheet
- Excerpt from *Steep Trails* by John Muir

**ENDURING
UNDERSTANDING
(BIG IDEA)
ESSENTIAL
QUESTIONS**

Progressive movement activists pushed for and achieved the establishment of the Grand Canyon as a national park.

1. Why is John Muir an important figure in the history of Grand Canyon National Park? Explain how he can be considered an activist.
2. Why could the establishment of national parks be considered a reform of the Progressive movement?
3. What made the Grand Canyon region unique and worth preserving as a National Park? What made the Canyon “Grand” enough to be worth preserving in the minds of most Americans?

**LEARNING
OBJECTIVES**

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze the legislative acts that created our national park system.
2. Make connections between the development of the national park system and the Progressive movement.
3. Identify the impact of progressive activists such as John Muir in the establishment of the Grand Canyon National Park.

BACKGROUND

The early 20th century was an era consumed with change. The Progressive movement pushed for economic, political, and social reforms and agitated, often successfully, for laws to regulate child labor, restrict alcohol, insure pure food and water, and control business practices. Progressives aimed to eliminate corruption, control immigration, give citizens more direct control of government, and ensure women’s suffrage.

Progressives did not confine their concerns to urban areas. They also sought to manage natural resources and protect American wilderness areas. With the development of the automobile, traveling became a possibility for more people. Wilderness areas, such as the Grand Canyon, could be visited by vehicle. This proved both positive and problematic. Some activists such as President Theodore Roosevelt and conservationist John Muir saw the need for protecting the beauty and grandeur of places such as the Grand Canyon. This protection would guarantee that future generations could also experience the wonder these lands had to offer. When T.R. visited the Grand Canyon in 1903, he said, “Leave it as it is. You cannot improve upon it. The ages have been at work on it and man can only mar it. What you can do is keep it for your children, your children’s children, and for all who come after you.”

Progressive era activists took many routes to make their opinions known. Roosevelt used legislation, as Muir painted pictures through words. Through their combined efforts, Progressives succeeded in preserving the Grand Canyon and other national parks. Note that the Grand Canyon was not the first national park. Yellowstone (1872) and Yosemite (1890) came before.

**SUGGESTED
PROCEDURE**

1. As a ‘warm up’ activity students are asked: What is a national park and are they necessary or beneficial?

2. As an introduction to the Progressive movement and to the creation of national parks the instructor will then show the class “Establishing National Parks in the Progressive Era” PowerPoint presentation. As the instructor leads the class through the PowerPoint, students should fill out their PowerPoint Notes Sheet. These notes will be used later as a reference.
3. Following the PowerPoint and discussion students will be given a copy of The Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Organic Act of 1916 along with two copies of the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet. The class should be divided into groups of four to five students to answer the questions. Students should be instructed to focus on Sec. 2 of the Antiquities Act and Sec. 1 of the Organic Act for the purposes of this lesson.
4. After each group has completed their Primary Source Analysis Worksheet the teacher can pose the following question to the class: Why are these two documents considered to be examples of Progressive Era legislation?
5. Students will be instructed to keep their Primary Source Analyses and PowerPoint Notes to be used at the end of class.
6. Next the instructor will distribute copies of an excerpt from John Muir’s book *Steep Trails* and the chapter “The Grand Canyon of the Colorado.” Before students begin reading, the instructor should introduce the reading by asking the class if they have ever been moved by a piece of writing. The chapter can either be read by the teacher to the class, in groups or individually by each student depending upon the reading level of the class. Following the reading one or all of these discussion questions can be posed to the class, depending upon time allowed:
 - What was John Muir’s purpose in recording his observations of the Grand Canyon?
 - What kind of kind of writing is this? Why would it have an impact on the reader?
 - With this reading in mind why do you think that John Muir is an important figure in the history of the Grand Canyon National Park?
 - Why can Muir be considered an activist? Would his efforts be useful in today’s environmental movement?
 - What types of response or opposing viewpoints do you think someone who is against the establishment of national parks have to this excerpt?
7. For the final class activity, the teacher will have seven large pieces of butcher paper cut with one of the following questions headlined on each sheet.
 - Why were national parks established?
 - What was the Progressive movement and why is it important to the establishment of the Grand Canyon?
 - How were individual Progressives important? Explain.
 - What made the Grand Canyon worth preserving to Muir and others?
 - Why were the Antiquities Act and Organic Act important to the Progressive Movement?

- Are activists important in a democratic society? What role do they play?
- Can today's environmental movement learn anything from the Progressive Era's establishment of national parks?

8. The class should then be divided into seven groups, one group for each paper. Each group will stand before one sheet of butcher paper. Each student will be given a marker to record their ideas and thoughts about the question posed. Their response can be written or drawn. Each group will be given 1-2 minutes at each paper to write their responses and then instructed to rotate to the next question. As the activity progresses students should be given a little more time at each station to think of new ideas not already included.

EVALUATIONS (ASSESSMENT)

The PowerPoint Notes sheet and Primary Source Analyses can be collected at the end of class to be graded if the teacher so chooses. The final rotation activity acts as a synthesis of information presented throughout the lesson and can be used as a final assessment of student understanding of the material.

EXTENSIONS

- Students can watch the second half of the DVD *The Good Fight* about the modern day fight to protect the giant sequoias in California. Students can then write a response paper on how Martin Litton serves as an example of modern progressive action. This is a good activity in which to examine the parallels between this modern day issue and progressivism of the early twentieth century.
- For those students or teachers who are interested in learning more about John Muir and his impact upon the Grand Canyon and the Grand Canyon National Park there are two articles available from the Grand Canyon Association publication Reflections of Grand Canyon Historians: Ideas, Arguments, and First-Person Accounts.
 - Fleck, Richard F. "John Muir's Historic Visits to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado in 1896 and Later." Reflections of Grand Canyon Historians: Ideas, Arguments, and First-Person Accounts. Ed. Todd R. Berger. N.p.: Grand Canyon Association, 2008. 137-140.
 - Hughes, J. Donald. "John Muir and Gifford Pinchot at Grand Canyon." Reflections of Grand Canyon Historians: Ideas, Arguments, and First-Person Accounts. Ed. Todd R. Berger. N.p.: Grand Canyon Association, 2008. 141-145.

RESOURCES

- American Antiquities Act. Pub. L. 431-433. 8 June 1906. White House Historical Association. The White House Historical Association, Washington. 6 June 2008
<http://www.whitehousehistory.org/04/subs/04_b_1906a.html>.
- Anderson, Michael F. "Becoming a National Park." Polishing the Jewel: An Administrative History of Grand Canyon National Park. Ed. L. Greer Price and Faith Marcovecchio. Grand Canyon Association, 2000. 6-10. Grand Canyon Association. Grand Canyon Association. 5 June 2008
<http://www.grandcanyon.org/booksmore/epubs/polishing/pdfs/02_becoming_a_national_park_part2.pdf>.

**STANDARDS
(NATIONAL AND AZ,
CORRELATIONS
SOCIAL STUDIES,
LANGUAGE,
READING, WRITING,
ARTS, AND TECH**

Muir, John. Steep Trails. Ed. William Frederic Bade. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918. Online at Sierra Club: John Muir Exhibit. Ed. Harold Wood. 22 Jan. 2008. Sierra Club, California.
http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/frameindex.html?http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/steep_trails/index.html. Accessed 6 June 2008.

Organic Act. 25 Aug. 1916. The National Park Service. 26 Feb. 2008. U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington. 6 June 2008
<<http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm>>.

“T.R.: The Story of Theodore Roosevelt, PBS “American Experience”. Online.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tr/>. Accessed 9 June 2008.