



Great Baltimore Fire

Lesson Plan

Duration:

1 hour.

Description:

In the Great Baltimore Fire program, students use primary sources to learn about one of the worst fires in American history. Students see how the rapid development of Baltimore created the perfect situation for such a disaster. Primary sources used in this program include original footage by Thomas Edison, recovered artifacts, and two pieces of apparatus that fought the fire. They will see how the fire alarm systems had fire fighters on the scene within half an hour. Lastly, the impact the fire had on Baltimore's and America's firefighting infrastructure will be addressed.

Inquiry Question:

How have disasters changed the world we live in?

Desired Results:

After this program students will understand the following:

- The role of rapid urbanization in causing the fire.
- The types of alarms used to communicate fires.
- That mutual aid from 24 other cities helped bring the fire under control.
- The difference between primary and secondary sources and how each tells us about the events of the past.
- How the fire prompted the construction of Baltimore's high pressure system and reconstruction with wider streets.

Activities:

Students will participate in the following activities during this program:

- See how Baltimore developed with narrow streets that made it susceptible to fire.
- Examine documentary and other secondary sources that give an overview of the events surrounding the fire.
- Interpret what artifacts, newspapers, and other primary sources tell us about the fire.
- Participate in a demonstration of the alarm signals that were sent out during the fire.

Assessment:

Students respond successfully to the following question prompts during the tour:

- How did changes to Baltimore's natural environment make it susceptible to a large fire?
- How did the Great Fire change the way people lived in Baltimore and Maryland?
- What changes to the way we fight fires occurred as a result of the Great Fire?
- What do artifacts recovered from the Great Fire tell us?
- Are fire fighters better prepared as a result of the Great Fire?



Maryland State Curriculum Standards – Social Studies Connections

Subject: Geography

Grades: 3-8

Topic: D. Modifying and Adapting to the Environment

Indicator: 1. Analyze why and how people in the United States modify their natural environment and the impact of those modifications.

- Objectives:**
- Analyze the tradeoffs of using resources to pursue economic opportunities v. preserving the environment, such as westward movement.
 - Explain the consequences of modifying the natural environment, such as soil erosion, loss of soil fertility and over-fishing.
 - Identify and explain land use issues that illustrate the conflict between economic growth and using the environment.
 - Analyze how land use was managed by the federal government such as the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Subject: History

Grade: 4

Topic: A. Individuals and Societies Change Over Time

Indicator: 1. Analyze the chronology and significance of key historical events leading to early settlement in Maryland.

- Objectives:**
- Explain how and why the Maryland colony was established, including political and economic motives for coming to the new world.
 - Compare the development of places and regions, such as St. Mary's City, Western Maryland, Kent Island, and Annapolis.
 - Describe the establishment of slavery and how it shaped life in Maryland.

Skills and Processes

Grades: 6-8

Topic: D. Acquire Social Studies Information

Indicator: 1. Identify primary and secondary sources of information that relate to the topic/situation/problem being studied.

- Objectives:**
- Gather and read appropriate print sources, such as journals, periodicals, government documents, timelines, databases, reference works, and web sites.
 - Read and obtain information from texts representing diversity in content, culture, authorship, and perspective.
 - Locate and gather data and information from appropriate non-print sources, such as music, artifacts, charts, maps, graphs, photographs, video clips, illustrations, paintings, political cartoons, multimedia, interviews, and oral histories.
 - Access and process information that is factual and reliable from readings, investigations, and/or oral communications.

Skills and Processes

Grades: 6-8

Topic: F. Analyze Social Studies Information

Indicator: 1. Interpret information from primary and secondary sources.

- Objectives:**
- Interpret information in maps, charts and graphs.
 - Interpret information from field studies and surveys.
 - Analyze a document to determine point of view.
 - Analyze the perspective of the author to determine if the document or topic is historically significant.
 - Identify bias and prejudice.