



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2006 Volume I: Photographing America: A Cultural History, 1840-1970

The Photographed Environment in America

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.01.02
by Stephen P. Broker

This curriculum unit presents a brief history of the environmental movement in America from the 1840s to the present. The unit relies on the close analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century photographs to examine America's changing worldviews of our natural heritage and how we choose to use our lands and natural resources. These visual images, identified from several easily referenced photographic archives, introduce a series of topics that one studies in a high school environmental science course. Included among these topics are the exploration of the American West, the extraction of natural resources from the land and the sea, the exploitation of and subsequent efforts to restore and protect wildlife in America, the harmful impacts of indiscriminate use of toxic chemicals by agriculture and industry, and the degradation of the country's air, land, and water.

The photographs cited in this unit have been chosen to provoke thought and promote discussion about environmental topics. They are central to the unit's narrative description of key events in the American experience with nature, as well as to the various classroom activities that my students will conduct. In addition, the unit identifies key historical figures in the environmental movement and makes reference to some of their more important writings about nature. My intention is to portray a nation that continues to seek a workable definition of the relation between the economic and the ecological benefits of nature.

(Developed for AP Environmental Science, grades 11-12, and Honors Biology, grade 10; recommended for AP Environmental Science and Environmental Science, grades 11-12, Biology and Honors Biology, grades 9-10)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2021 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>