



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume III: The U.S. National Parks Movement

Outdoor Museums: History and Parks

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.03.02
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The U.S. National Park System consists of 355 units that have been set aside by the federal government to protect the finest of our heritage in terms of landscape, historical experience, or natural resources. The park system reflects a sense of pride in America's wealth of wilderness and its significant history.

The underlying theme of this unit is to provide students with an awareness of our National Parks; they exist and they reflect American values regarding resources, unique landscapes, and our culture. This unit is designed to be used to supplement the U.S. history portion of the curriculum or may be taught in parts as the topics are presented, e.g. Colonial America, Revolutionary beginnings, and natural resources. The unit is aimed at middle achievers to help connect them to the landscape and history.

The unit summarizes three major topics: wilderness values, the National Park Service formation and the National Park System's diversity. Using this information as introductory, teachers may wish to focus on the related concepts: the role of state parks, the example of a seashore park or an historic park site. Fictional stories that relate to each (Sleeping Giant State Park, Cape Cod National Seashore, and Minute Man National Historical Park) may be duplicated for the students and follow up activities are provided. This unit presents an opportunity to take students on a journey of study into different landscapes—a venture into the outdoor museums of America.

The popular image of a national park is often that of a redwood forest, the Grand Canyon, Carlsbad Caverns, or Yellowstone. Yet more than half of the National Park units preserve places and commemorate persons, events, and activities important in our history. The Park Service, while conserving natural scenery and wildlife, has a role as steward of our historic resources. Collectively the National Park System is a national asset giving an urban population access to the natural world, recreation, and heritage.

(Recommended for Western Hemisphere, grade 8; U.S. History, grade 10; and Connecticut, grade 6)

Key Words

Parks Connecticut U.S. National

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