



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

Eclectic Strategies for the Study of U.S. National Parks

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.03.05
by Cynthia Mcdaniels

The primary purpose of this unit is to examine U.S. National Parks from different perspectives and on varied levels. Many issues, problems, and concerns that are inherent in the park system are studied with the view of enriching secondary level students with a broad knowledge base on national parks.

The first section is designed to introduce students to the extensiveness and complexities of the U.S. National Park System through the use of maps, facts, narratives, speeches, debates, vocabulary, research, and film. These varied strategies are aimed at the development of academic skills while simultaneously building strong baseline data and background on the U.S. National Parks. While the exercises in each lesson are structured to follow the ordered sequence for maximum instructional effectiveness, each section can be taught independently. Also, the teacher has the flexibility to either embellish each section and enlarge on the concepts and reinforce academic skills, or narrow the scope to cater to the many abilities and interests of middle and high school students.

Having a solid familiarity with domestic parks, the second lesson explores selected global attributes of national parks. By comparing and analyzing park efforts abroad, the U.S. parks can be placed in an international perspective, which further strengthens the understanding of American parks. The Kenyan Park efforts are cited often to acquaint students to one of Africa's famous game parks and to highlight the geopolitics of the ivory trade.

Finally, students can prepare to experience the opportunities that national parks provide. Even though the recreational theme is central to this third lesson, other park qualities such as wilderness, are featured. The last exercise is an excursion to a park.

In summary, this unit utilizes many disciplines and divergent methods to study national parks, using the processes peculiar to the knowledge forms. It is a flexible unit that can be adjusted to all ability groupings and time slots.

(Recommended for Social Studies, History, and Geography, grades 8-12)

Key Words

History U.S. National Parks

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