

Create a National Park

Subjects: Science and English

Duration: 1-1 ½ hours

Location: Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: National park, natural resources, Cultural resources

Objectives:

The participants will be able to:

- a. Cite three reasons why national parks are needed,
- b. Describe characteristics of a national park,
- c. List three problems facing national parks,
- d. Analyzed information learned to write a persuasive proposal for a national park designation.

Method:

Participants will create a mini-national park in an outdoor area, marking a nature trail and providing visitors with information about their park.

Background:

National Parks are set aside by Congress to preserve and protect our natural, recreational, and cultural resources for our use and enjoyment by this and future generations. There are over 423 national park areas in the national park system, including Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A park may have many outstanding features for which it is set aside, or it may be preserved for a specific site. For example, it could be a natural feature that it is set aside for, like the Grand Canyon, or it may be preserved for a specific historical site, like Gettysburg National Battlefield. Great Smoky Mountains National Park was set aside to preserve both the southern Appalachian Mountains forests, including the diverse plants and animals living there, and the rich cultural history of people connected to these lands.

Park management is set up much like a school system, the rangers are like teachers. Each day brings new challenges to the park and its resources. At Great Smoky Mountains National Park, there are a combination of problems, air and water quality, exotic species, destruction of habitat, and more.

Upon arriving at many of the national parks, the visitor pays a small entrance fee and is handed a park map that outlines the major resources and sites to visit. Larger parks have a visitor center where rangers dispense information about the park. One part of a park ranger's job is to interpret the park resources and problems to the visitors so that they understand the concerns of the park. Why? Because parks belong to the people and they must learn about these valuable resources and how to preserve and protect them!

Materials

(For each pair of students)

- Clipboard
- Paper, pencil
- Hand lens
- One fifteen-foot piece of string
- Six popsicle sticks
- Poker chips (at least one per student)
*Note the teacher can substitute peanuts for the poker chips. It only costs peanuts to get into a national park!
- Copies of "Owner's Manual to Great Smoky Mountains National Park"

Create A National Park Activity:

1. Discuss the concept of a national park with your participants. Ask participants if they have ever been to a national park. What makes it different from a state park or a county park?
2. Ask participants what they would like in a national park if they were to create a “perfect park.” Why set up a national park? Who owns national parks?
3. Pair off the participants. Distribute the materials listed to each pair.
4. Assign, or let each pair choose, an outdoor spot for their national park. Using their string, they should rope off their area.
5. Participants must move about their national park on hands and knees. Using the hand lens, the students should choose the scenic values of their park; a hole might be the Grand Canyon, a rock might be a mountain, for instance. The popsicle sticks can be used to mark the trails or scenic spots.
6. Give the group about 20-25 minutes to set up the trails in their park. After the participants have marked their parks, they must make a brochure (including a map) publicizing their park.
7. Once the parks are ready for business, the “rangers” (the paired participants) must advertise their park. They should advertise their park by shouting out its attributes. Ask the pairs to split up. One person in the pair should remain in the park to interpret it, while the second person visits other national parks. The participants may then switch. The peanuts or tokens are the entrance fee needed to visit another national park. Every person must visit at least one national park.
8. After they have visited the national parks, ask participants the following questions:
Did they have problems getting visitors to come to their park? Were visitors always careful with the parks’ resources? Did they have too many visitors? What would they change? What problems occurred? How would they raise money to improve the park’s facilities?

Evaluation

Discuss why we should have national parks. What can you do to help protect the resources in a national park? Who has the responsibility of preserving and protecting the park for future generations?

Extension

- After discussing the questions above, distribute to each participant a copy “Owner’s Manual to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.” Have them sign it once they understand their responsibilities.
 - Write a proposal to get funding to buy a national park. Presentations should be made to the “Superintendent” (teacher or principal or family).
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Owner's Manual to Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established to assure protection of their unique flora and fauna, scenic views, and important stories of the people who came before us, as well as for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

Who are the parks' rightful owners?

All of us, including YOU!

With ownership there comes responsibility. This owner's manual will help you protect national parks for your enjoyment and that of the next generation. Make no mistake; it is a big responsibility, this ownership business.

What are the benefits of ownership?

The parks are an incredible refuge for plants, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, fish and more. The parks preserve the stories of our heritage so they can be shared for generations to come! The national park is also a refuge for people too; a special place to visit, where the wonders of nature can be discovered firsthand.

What are the drawbacks of ownership?

Your national parks are in trouble! Their resources are threatened each day. Things like water and air quantity, introduction of exotic plants and animals, and endangered species are just a few of the many concerns facing the parks. As an owner you have a lot of responsibility.

What can you do to help you park and how much is it going to cost?

These are some of the questions you might ask before you take on the job of ownership. Listed below are a few things you can do to help preserve and protect your national parks. One word of warning: Taking on this ownership means you could possibly become addicted to the love of the Great Smoky Mountains, its' stories, and the natural world!

Instructions for Owners:

1. Visit your parks. Learn more about the parks' resources.
2. Tell others about the park and get them involved.
3. Reduce...reuse...recycle! It will help protect clean air and water.
4. Learn ways to conserve water in your home and community.
5. Save electricity so that less fossil fuels need to be burned. Fossil fuels come from the earth (at a cost to the environment).
6. Plant native trees and shrubs. They use less water and are beneficial to native wildlife. Remove exotic plants that can spread to natural areas. Learn which plants pose to your natural areas.
7. Volunteer for park work projects.
8. Start an ecology club at your school.
9. Write your local, state, and federal representatives to share your concerns on environmental issues facing the parks.
10. Raise money for habitat restoration.

Lifetime Warranty

I, the undersigned, understand that this warranty is valid only so long as the owner's manual is strictly followed.

(Signature)

Curriculum Standards:

Kindergarten:

a. **K.FL.VA.7b** With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Sort common objects into categories that gain a sense of concepts the categories represent.

Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites.

Make real-life connections between words and their use.

Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action

b. **K.FFL.PA.2** Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

Recognize and begin to produce rhyming words.

Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.

Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single syllables in spoke words.

Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes in two-and three-phoneme (VC or CVC) words.

Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

First Grade:

a.**FL.VA.7b** With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Sort words into categories to gain a sense of the concepts the categories present.

Define words by category and by one or more key attributes

Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

Distinguish shades of meaning among words by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.

b.**1.FL.PA.2.** Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phenomes)

Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken sing-syllable words.

Orally produce sing-syllable words by lending sounds (phonemes) in spoken sing-syllable words.

Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken sing-syllable words.

Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

Fourth Grade:

4.ETS1: Engineering Design

4.ETS2: Links Among Engineering, Technology, Science, and Society