

President Johnson and the National Park Service  
Distance Learning Pre-Visit Resources and Lesson Plan  
3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Social Studies

**Background**

The National Park Service is over 100 years old but National Parks themselves go back even farther in the country's history. Abraham Lincoln approved the creation of Yosemite as a state park in California in 1864 and Congress passed legislation creating Yellowstone as the nation's first National Park in 1872 during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant. The National Park Service as we know it today was formally created in 1916 with the signing of the Organic Act by President Woodrow Wilson.

United States Presidents have played a key role in preserving federal land for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. Teddy Roosevelt is often referred to as the "Conservation President." He created the U.S. Forest Service, and put more land under federal protection, whether as National Park, National Forest, Wildlife Refuge, or National Monument than any other President. He signed into law the Antiquities Act, which safeguarded early Native American ruins and antiquities.

During his 1933 New Deal, President Franklin Roosevelt, mobilized his Civilian Conservation Corps to work in national parks to build and repair roads, bridges, plant trees, and make improvements. He oversaw transfer of federally owned and operated national cemeteries, monuments, and historic sites to the administration of the National Park Service. Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy all added acres to our National Parks.

President Lyndon B. Johnson continued the work of his predecessors and went even further. He introduced ideas relevant to the "Great Society" at the University of Michigan commencement on May 22, 1964, calling on the government and citizens to renew man's contact with nature, reminding those in the audience that, "we have prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful." The idea of "quality of life" was a key theme in Johnson's vision for a "Great Society." Although racial equality and the elimination of poverty were the primary goals of the program, Johnson felt that environmentalism, especially where it concerned pollution and degradation of the natural and urban environments should be included in the goals of a better America envisioned by the "Great Society." President Johnson felt that all Americans should be able to spend time in nature and appreciate our nation's beauty. Therefore, he wanted to create more parks and wildlife areas, closer to cities for the use of ALL citizens.

## **Lesson Overview**

Arguably, the President who did the most to protect and promote the preservation of our environment was Lyndon Baines Johnson, President of the United States from 1963-1969. His environmental legacy is often overshadowed by his unparalleled accomplishments in Civil Rights legislation and the contentious issues surrounding the Vietnam War.

Lyndon B. Johnson grew up in the beautiful Texas Hill Country. His experience in the Hill Country, along with the support of his wife, Mrs. Johnson, played a significant role in encouraging his enormous efforts toward improving conservation of natural resources, preservation of those resources and wildlife, and our historic buildings in America as a whole. No place has LBJ's environmental impact been felt more keenly than in the expansion of the National Park Service that took place during his Presidency.

The following resources and activities will prepare students for their virtual visit to Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park:

**Part 1:** Students will watch a video and analyze a map to learn about National Park Service.

**Part 2:** Students will explore the meaning of place to understand how a place can shape who we are and how it can inspire us to protect it. These activities will allow students to connect with the natural landscapes around them and reflect how the Texas Hill Country influenced President Johnson's environmental views and legislation.

Educators can modify each activity to meet the classroom needs.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

Students will be able to:

- Understand the impact of the physical environment of the Texas Hill Country in President Johnson's environmental views and policies.
- Analyze documents to learn about the National Park Service.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- How does the natural environment shape our identity and culture?
- What does President Johnson's environmental legacy mean to you?

## **TEKS**

### **Social Studies, Grade 3, Adopted 2018.**

(1) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and ideas have influenced the history of various communities. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how individuals, events, and ideas have changed communities, past and present.

### **Social Studies, Grade 4, Adopted 2018.**

(6) Geography. The student understands the concept of regions. The student is expected to:

(A) identify, locate, and describe the physical regions of Texas (Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, Coastal Plains), including their characteristics such as landforms, climate, vegetation, and economic activities; and

(B) compare the physical regions of Texas (Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, Coastal Plains).

### **Social Studies, Grade 5, Adopted 2018.**

(5) History. The student understands important issues, events, and individuals in the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the significance of issues and events of the 20th century such as industrialization, urbanization, the Great Depression, the world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions.

## **COMMON CORE**

### **History and Social Studies – Grade 6 to 8: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

### **History and Social Studies – Grade 9 to 10: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

### **History and Social Studies – Grade 11 to 12: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

## MATERIALS

- Short Video: [Here's How the National Park Service Got Started](#) (4 min)
- Map of the National Park Service (PDF)
- Map of the NPS Worksheet (PDF)
- Whiteboard
- Markers
- Paper
- Writing Utensils
- Coloring Utensils

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Part One: 30 Minutes.

1. Introduce students to the National Park Service by watching "[Here's How the National Park Service Got Started](#)" by the History Channel.
  - a. Educator can ask the following questions to reflect on the video:
    - i. What park did President Ulysses S. Grant declare as the first national park?
    - ii. Who was John Muir?
    - iii. What were President Theodore Roosevelt's contributions to the creation and preservation of national parks?
    - iv. Why is 1916 an important year in the history of the National Park Service?
    - v. What is the purpose of the National Park Service?
    - vi. President Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act of 1965. What's its importance?
2. After watching video, students will analyze "Map of the National Park Service" by answering the questions in the "Map of the NPS Worksheet."
3. After completing the first two activities, educator can lead a discussion based on the last question found in the worksheet.
  - a. Option: Educators can modify the last question to allow students to pick a National Park from their state. Then, educator can place students in breakout groups for them to identify what makes that National Park special. Students will then share their answers as a group to the entire class.

### Part Two: 30 minutes.

4. Define the "power of place" and discuss what it means to have a "sense of place." Ask students to think of places that are meaningful to them. How do the experiences in those places contribute to how they view themselves? Ask students how their favorite

places change over time. This abstract understanding of geography creates awareness between people and their environment, it serves as a form of human geography. Educators may use a whiteboard to record students answers. An option is to have students record their answers on a separate sheet of paper and then share their answers with the entire group.

5. A hands-on activity to solidify the meaning of place is to have students draw a map of their school. Take them on a senses scavenger hunt where they document the senses experienced in different places around school. Then have them write about their favorite places in the building or outside. Ask a big picture question pertaining to the greater community. What other places would the students like to explore or learn about.

## ASSESSMENT

Educators can have students generate questions based on what they learned during this lesson plan to ask Park Ranger during their virtual visit.

For more lesson plans and activities about President Johnson's environmental legacy please visit [Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park education webpage](#).