



Cumberland Island: National Park Service

Lesson Title: *What's a National Park?*

Grade Levels: 3rd-5th

Activity Time: 60 minutes

Location: Classroom

Subject Area: Social Studies

GA Performance Standards
Map Skills

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- explain the purpose of a national park.
- work with a group to create a map of a national park
- define stewardship.
- define wilderness.

MATERIALS

- Computer/Projector
- Internet access
- *Creating a National Park* Worksheet
- Large sheets of paper or poster board
- Colored pencils, markers

Background: *National Parks* are areas set aside to preserve natural or historical resources. They are managed by the **National Park Service**, an agency with the **United States Department of the Interior**. *Cumberland Island National Seashore* was created in 1972 to preserve the largest undeveloped barrier island along the Georgia coast. The 36,000 acre island contains 8,800 acres designated as a **National Wilderness Area**, plus 11,000 as potential wilderness. (A *wilderness* is a "road-less area where man is a visitor and does not remain.") The island has four major **ecosystems**: *beach and dunes*, *maritime forest*, *freshwater systems* and *salt marsh*. Together these barrier island ecosystems form the first line of defense for the mainland against storms. Barrier islands are dynamic systems, constantly in motion. They react to ocean fluctuations and changing weather patterns while protecting the mainland behind it.

A small percentage of Cumberland Island is still privately owned and a few residents have retained rights contracts. When the contracts expire, the land will pass into the Park Service's possession and gradually revert to a natural wilderness.

Procedure:

- Ask students if they have been to a National Park. Have them tell which state it was located in or point it out on a United States map. Ask if they know why that park was created. For example: *Yellowstone NP, Wyoming – geologic features*
- Ask students why we need national parks. Why can't we just let it alone? (*to preserve habitats for plants & animals; aesthetic value; prevent development*). Use **websites** in the **Additional Resources** section to help them better understand what a national park is.
- Explain that they will now have a chance to create their own national park. Divide class into groups of 4-5 students. Hand each group a copy of the worksheet – *Creating a National Park*. As a group, they will need to decide which of the items on the worksheet they would like to have in their park.
- Once they have decided on the features to be included in their park, ask them to draw & label a map of their park.

- Have each group present their park and its attributes to the rest of the class. After each presentation, ask students to explain why they selected the features they did for their park. Did every group pick the same features? Discuss the reasons why or why not. Explain that people have different ideas about how the lands should be managed: *historically* (preservation of cultural & historic structures) *versus naturally* (seashore access for recreational fishing, photography, wildlife viewing, species protection). Finite resources mean that sometimes difficult choices have to be made in how lands are managed.
- Ask students what might happen if these areas were not set aside. Now that their parks are created, who maintains them? Define **stewardship** (*taking care of and protecting*). Who is responsible for the continued stewardship of their land? Are there any guidelines for their park? Can anyone visit? Walk or ride anywhere? Can visitors do anything they want in the park?
- Wilderness areas are areas set aside in their natural state. People are visitors there. They should follow the guidelines: *Take only pictures - Kill only time - Leave only footprints*. Did any groups designate areas in their parks as Wilderness areas? Explain that national parks are a trust for everyone and it is everyone's responsibility to watch over and protect them.
- Public comment periods are set up for major issues and decisions in the National Park system. Examples include hog eradication, transportation issues, and feral animal control. Why would the general public be interested in these issues? (*Hunting rights, wilderness issues, public image of feral animals*).

Evaluation:

Ask students why national parks are created. Ask them to describe the types of things they might find in a national park. Have them define stewardship and give examples of proper behavior when visiting protected areas. Ask them to explain what a wilderness area is.

Online Resources:

The following resources can serve as background information for this lesson, or to better help students understand what a National Park is and where they are located across the United States.

National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>

National Park Service: Web Rangers (Kids)

<http://www.nps.gov/webrangers/>

YouTube National Park Service Videos

<http://www.youtube.com/user/NationalParkService/videos>

Natural Inquirer: Benefits Edition (A middle school science education journal; articles can be printed out)

<http://www.naturalinquirer.org/Wilderness-Benefits-Edition-i-11.html>

Wilderness.Net

<http://www.wilderness.net/>

Creating a National Park Worksheet

DIRECTIONS: You and your group have been asked to create a new national park. **Circle** the items below that you would like to include in your national park. Once you have made your selections, create a **map of your park**. Be sure to include the items you circled. Label these circled items on your map to make them easy to locate. You may even want to consider adding a **legend** to your map.

Tennis Courts

Flowing Stream

Large Forested Area

Swimming Pool

Wetland

Sand Dunes

Grocery Store

Reptiles

Marsh

Large Boulders

Wide Beach

Walking Trails

Insects

Bicycles

Arcade

Bookstore

Amusement Park

Campground

Movie Theater

Grasses & Shrubs

Gas Station

Fish & Crustaceans

Pond

Jet Ski Rentals

Trolleys

Boardwalk

Birds

Mammals

Condominiums

Golf Course

Additional Items: