

Behind the Bricks

An Investigation at Fort Point National Historic Site

How can buildings and artifacts help me to see the history of a place?

This essential question frames *Behind the Bricks* and allows students to engage in historic inquiry at Fort Point National Historic Site. This essential question:

1. Reflects what they study without directing them to one correct answer.
2. Provokes “how” or “why” questions rather than “what” questions.
3. Applies to places beyond Fort Point.
4. Invites discussion from everyone based on both experience and understanding.

Program Goals

1. Enrich students’ understanding of place through historic inquiry.
2. Promote an understanding of the historic significance of Fort Point to Gold Rush San Francisco and how and why the National Park Service preserves and protects the fort.
3. Encourage students to value national parks as places for learning and recreation, and feel a personal connection to their local national park.

Program Objectives

1. Students will examine, question, and interpret historic photographs and artifacts to learn about life in Fort Point and San Francisco during the Gold Rush.
2. Students will develop relevant questions and construct reasonable explanations.
3. Students will express their findings orally and in writing.

Social Studies Content/Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills for 4th Grade

- 4.1.1 Analyze effects of the Gold Rush on settlements, daily life, politics, and the physical environment.

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

Students judge the significance of the relative location of a place e.g., proximity to a harbor, on trade route and analyze how relative advantages or disadvantages can change over time.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.

Historical Interpretation

Students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.

Program Description

The program has three elements: Two pre-visit classroom lessons provided by the teacher and a teacher led Fort Point field session with a short introduction from ranger; and post-visit assessment lesson guided by the teacher.

Teacher Facilitated Pre-Visit Lessons

Lesson 1 – Introducing Fort Point and Historic Inquiry

Topic: Essential Question and Fort Point National Historic Site

Inquiry Question: *How can buildings and artifacts help me to see the history of a place?*

Objective:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

1. Define and identify buildings, artifacts, and place as clues to the past.
2. Generate questions for their investigation of Fort Point.

Time: 90 minutes

Activities

Step 1

1. Introduce lesson by posing the Essential Question on the board or large paper:
How can buildings and artifacts help me to see the history of a place?
2. Students will investigate this question throughout the program. Before responding directly to the question, help students define buildings, artifacts, history, and place. Explain that artifacts are objects created by people, such as photographs, tools, clothing, diaries, etc.
3. After students define the concepts, they answer the Essential Question in pairs, in a group, or with the entire class.
4. Discuss understandings with entire class.

Step 2

1. Explain that the class is going to use a photograph, one type of artifact, to begin to imagine Gold Rush San Francisco.
2. Model "See, Think, Wonder" for the entire class with Photograph A (ship sailing past Fort Point).

Step 3

1. Students form small groups of four or five. Each group receives Photograph B (ships in the harbor in front of buildings) and completes a "See, Think, Wonder" exercise.
2. Students share their conclusions and ask questions of each other.

Step 4

1. Show the 7-minute DVD of Fort Point.
2. Ask for any questions and record them for use later in the program.

Lesson Two – Fort Point Community

Topic: People who formed the Fort Point community

Inquiry Question: *What was everyday life like at Fort Point?*

Objective:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

1. Describe the role of the groups of people most associated with Fort Point.
2. Generate investigative questions for their visit to Fort Point.

Time: 90 minutes

Resources: Handouts about the soldiers, laundresses, stonemasons, fort sutler, hospital stewards, lighthouse keepers, cooks

Activities

Step 1

1. Teacher poses inquiry question to the class: *What was everyday life like at Fort Point?*
2. Students reconvene into their small groups of four or five. Each group receives background materials about a Fort Point group.
3. Students complete the "3,2,1" exercise (individually or as a group).
4. Students will share their responses from the "3, 2, 1" exercise in a class discussion.

Behind the Bricks Teacher-Led Field Session at Fort Point

Topic: Investigating a historic site

Inquiry Question: *How can buildings and artifacts help me to see the history of a place?*

Objective:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

1. Identify, place, and interpret artifacts associated with Fort Point within their context.
2. Link particular importance to a geographic place (Fort Point to San Francisco Bay).
3. Pose explanations to inquiry questions based on first-hand experience.

Activities

Step 1

1. NPS staff greet students outside Fort Point with a short introduction that includes guided inquiry with an artifact.

2. Students spend a few minutes observing and discussing the purpose and value of the geographic placement of Fort Point.

Step 2

1. The group enters into Fort Point and students form into groups of four or five.
2. Chaperones for each group receive a *Fort Point Stations* sheet which indicates where students should be making observations and generating questions in the Fort.
3. Students conduct their investigation of the fort. They will share one sheet with their group, writing their observations and questions in each station to be discussed later.

Step 3

1. Teacher facilitates dialogue about observations and questions that students generate. We recommend the benches near the cannons on the first level.
2. Program concludes and students may take their *Fort Point Stations* sheets with them back to class to use for their teacher facilitated Post-Visit Activity.

Teacher Facilitated Post-Visit Lesson

Topic: Fort Point National Historic Site

Inquiry Question: *How can buildings and artifacts help me to see the history of a place?*

Objective:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

1. Demonstrate their understanding of the role of historic buildings and artifacts in historic inquiry and understanding through writing narratives.
2. Recall relevant information to write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using descriptive details.

Time: Based on individual classroom needs

Resources: handouts, student notes, photographs, fort visit experience, DVD,

Assessment Activity

- Students write and illustrate a first person account of what life might have been like for one of the inhabitants of Fort Point using the evidence gathered from the historic photographs, artifacts, and the fort investigation, as well as the brief written descriptions of the people who built or lived in or near Fort Point.
- Students include at least two additional characters drawing from stories of other people who lived at the fort.
- Students consider carefully the focus/setting, organization/plot, narrative techniques, and language/structure.