



Learning About the National Park System And The National Park Service

Lesson One: Our Country's National Parks.¹

Preview—before you begin to read ask yourself these questions:

1. *What do I already know about National Parks?*
2. *What does each section heading tell me?*

Look at the review questions at the end of the section before you begin reading.

Section One: Introduction.

Has your family ever visited a national park? Do you know that national park units are areas of land that are protected so that their *natural* beauty or *historical* or *cultural significance* will survive for people to enjoy?



In school you have probably learned about the natural resources of the United States. Our country's national parks are another resource. Many people visit them each year. Some people enjoy hiking and camping, while others paint or photograph beautiful natural scenes. Even more visit national park areas to learn about our country's history and culture. In this lesson you will read about some of the most beautiful and

interesting national parks in the United States. You will learn that visiting and enjoying our national parks has become an American tradition. A tradition is a *custom* or *belief* handed down over time. Traditions help people to express their beliefs about how to live in the present. As you read this lesson think about how preserving natural, cultural, and historic areas expresses important beliefs of many Americans.

Section Two: Our First National Parks.

There is some debate over which place is our first national park.

On April 20, 1832, President Andrew Jackson signed legislation to set aside "...four sections of land including said (hot) springs, reserved for the future disposal of the United States (which) shall not be entered, located, or appropriated, for any other purpose whatsoever." This makes Hot Springs National Park the oldest national park among current NPS parks, predating Yellowstone National Park by forty years. Unfortunately, Congress failed to pass any legislation for administering the site. As a result, no controls were exerted in the area, and people continued to settle there, building businesses around and even over the springs.



On June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias to the State of California as an inalienable public trust. This was the first time in history that a federal government had set aside scenic lands simply to protect

¹ Some of this information was taken from *United States and Its Neighbors: Social Studies for a Changing World* [MacMillan/McGraw Hill School Publishing Company, New York, 1995]

them and to allow for their enjoyment by all people.

This idea was the spark that allowed for Yellowstone becoming the first official national park a few years later, when on March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed a bill into law that created Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone became the first place in the United States to be officially called a “national park.” In fact, it was the first national park in the world. So Hot Springs, Yosemite, and Yellowstone all have claims on being the “first national park.” But which one was first is really not important. What is important is that each of them was set aside and saved for us.

Section Three: A Tour of Our National Parks.

Currently there are over 390 places in the United States that have been *designated* as units in the National Park System. They are located in every region and more than 250 million people a year visit them. The United States’ tallest mountain [Alaska’s Mt. McKinley], its deepest lake [Oregon’s Crater Lake], its largest system of caves, [Kentucky’s Mammoth Cave, and its greatest *symbol* of hope and freedom [New York Harbor’s Statue of Liberty] can all be found in national park sites.



These are only a few of the natural, cultural, and historical wonders you might see if you were to visit our national parks. In Florida’s Everglades National Park you might watch bald eagles fishing for their dinner and enjoy a beautiful fiery sunset. In Great Smokey Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee, you can wake up to see an early morning fog hanging low over the forested

mountains and you can visit the Mountain Farm Museum to explore a log farmhouse, barn, apple house, springhouse, and a working blacksmith shop to get a sense of how families may have lived 100 years ago. In Maine’s Acadia National Park you could watch a harbor seal sunning itself on a shiny wet rock. In Utah’s Arches National Park you could stand beneath huge natural bridges of stone. And a few miles away at Canyonlands National Park you can search for the *granaries* and dwellings used by the ancestral Puebloans. In the magnificent Grand Canyon National Park in Utah, you can ride a raft down a river rushing through the canyon’s steep, orange walls. At San Antonio Missions National Historic Site you can see four Spanish frontier missions, part of a colonization system that stretched across the Spanish Southwest in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Section Four: A Growing Tradition.

Visiting these and other National Park sites has become a tradition for many Americans. Some people first visited national parks with their parents and grandparents. Now they take their own children to see these same beautiful and historic sights that they enjoyed years ago. Our country’s national parks are there for everyone to enjoy. National park sites are one way to be sure that beautiful and historic places will be preserved and protected for future Americans.



Lesson Two: Nature and So Much More. [Before you begin reading, look at the preview. Answer the review questions when you have completed reading.]

Preview:

Before you begin to read:

1. Review your answers to the first questions from the review for pages 36-39 in your social studies book.
2. Look at each section heading and guess what the section is about.

Section One: Creation of the National Park Service.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Congress had *established* several national parks, battlefields, memorials, and monuments.

In 1916 Congress passed a law creating the National Park Service to manage these places. Congress directed the National Park Service to *preserve* and *protect* these places so their natural and cultural resources and values could bring enjoyment, education, and *inspiration* for this and future generations.



Section Two: Growth of the National Park System.

The National Park System includes all the places *managed* by the National Park Service. The number of places managed by the National Park Service has greatly increased since the National Park Service was first created in 1916.



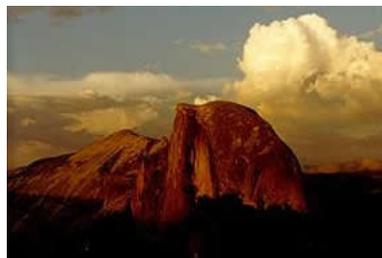
New National Park areas can be created in two ways. 1)

The President through public *proclamation* can declare places of historic or scientific interest already located on land owned or controlled by the national government to be National Monuments. 2) Congress can pass a law creating a new National Park Site.

Today, the National Park System *comprises* 388 areas covering more than 83 million acres in 49 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands.



It is the job of the National Park Service to preserve and protect these areas for future generations.



Section Three: Types of the National Park areas.

Generally, a **National Park** contains a variety of resources and includes large land or water areas.



to protect the last remaining large area of tallgrass prairie.

A **National Monument** is intended to preserve at least one significant historical or scientific resource. It is usually smaller than a National Park.



to protect the last remaining large area of tallgrass prairie.

National Preserves are areas created for the protection of certain resources. For example, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve was created



Although the great scenic areas within the National Park System are best known, well over half of the sites in the National Park System preserve places and *commemorate* persons, events, and activities important in the nation's history. These range from *archeological* sites associated with prehistoric Native Americans to sites related to modern Americans. These historical sites can be named **National Historic Site, National Historic Park** [This designation generally applies to historic parks that extend beyond single properties or buildings.], **National Military Park or National Battlefield.**



it need not occupy a site historically connected with its subject.

National Memorial: A national memorial is commemorative of a historic person or episode;



National Recreation Area: Some of these are centered on large water *reservoirs* and emphasize water-based recreation. Others are located near major population centers and combine scarce open spaces with the preservation of significant historic resources important natural areas in location that can provide outdoor recreation for large numbers of people.

National Seashore and National Lakeshore focus on the preservation of natural values while at the same time providing water-oriented recreation.



National River and National Wild and Scenic Riverways preserve ribbons of land bordering on free-flowing streams. Besides preserving rivers in their natural state, these areas provide opportunities for hiking and canoeing.

National Parkway: The title parkway refers to a roadway and the parkland paralleling the roadway. All were intended for scenic motoring along a protected *corridor* and often connect cultural sites.



National Scenic Trails are generally long-distance footpaths winding through areas of natural beauty.



National Historic Trails are trails or routes established by historic use and are historically significant with respect to a broad facet of American history such as trade, exploration, or migration.

Review:

1. When was the National Park Service created?
2. How can a national park area be created?
3. What is the job of the National Park Service?
4. Are there more natural or historical areas in the National Park System?
5. How do National Scenic Trails differ from National Historic Trails?

Vocabulary Words

Instructions: Write a short [four to eight words] definition for each word. Then use another piece of paper to write a short sentence using the vocabulary word.

Natural

Cultural

Historical

Significance

Custom

Belief

Designate

Symbol

Granaries

Preserved

Protected

Establish

Directed

Inspiration

Managed

Proclamation

Comprises

Commemorate

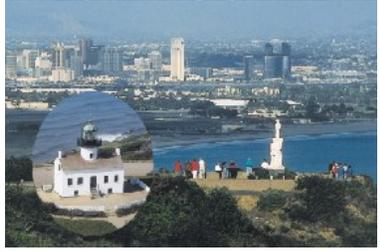
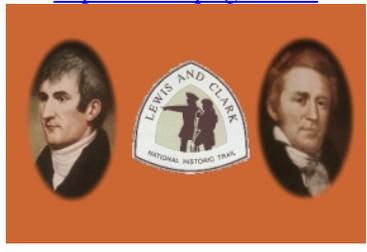
Archeological

Reservoirs

Corridor

Web Page Activity

There are many kinds of places in the National Park System. Each of the photos below represents a type of place preserved and protected by the National Park Service. Go to the website address and read the "In Brief" statement and examine these links: Nature and Science, History and Culture, Facts and Documents, and other pages you find interesting. **Then complete the assignment on the next page.**

<p style="text-align: center;">Yosemite National Park http://www.nps.gov/yose/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Lincoln Boyhood National Monument http://www.nps.gov/libo/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Blue Ridge Parkway http://www.nps.gov/blri/</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">Cabrillo National Monument http://www.nps.gov/cabr/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Lake Meredith National Recreation Area http://www.nps.gov/lamr/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Appalachian National Scenic Trail http://www.nps.gov/appa/</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">Tallgrass Prairie National Pressure http://www.nps.gov/tapr/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Assateague Island National Seashore http://www.nps.gov/asis/index.htm</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail http://www.nps.gov/lecl/</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">Lincoln Home National Historic Site http://www.nps.gov/liho/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Niobrara National Scenic River http://www.nps.gov/niob/</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Gettysburg National Military Park http://www.nps.gov/gett/</p> 

Writing Activity—Web Page

Choose one of the National Park Sites represented on the first page. Use the space below to write a five or six sentence paragraph explaining why it is important to preserve and protect it for future generations. Explain why it is an important place. Explain why it should be saved forever. Remember to use a topic sentence and have the other sentences support that topic or main sentence. Use some adjectives and adverbs. Remember to use end of sentence punctuation. Your teacher may ask you to read your paragraph out loud in class.

Writing Activity—Develop a Plan

While the national park areas are by any measure a huge success and something about which Americans can be proud, in recent years, the national park areas have been subjected to increasing stress.

The biggest stress being experienced by the national parks is in fact a result of their ability to attract people. Today, more than 350 million people annually visit the national parks and the number of visitors to the national parks is continuing to increase every year. The parks are becoming very

crowded. Many things like roads, water systems, and sewage systems need repair. There is more garbage and litter. And because there are more cars there is more air pollution.

What can be done to protect America's National Park sites?

ASSIGNMENT: Develop a plan to protect the “crown jewels” of America. Use the back to write a five or six sentence paragraph explaining your plan to preserve and protect the “crown jewels” for future generations. Remember to use a topic sentence and have the other sentences support that topic or main sentence. Use some adjectives and adverbs. Remember to use end of sentence punctuation. Your teacher may ask you to read your paragraph out loud in class.



Reading Comprehension—Matching Exercise

Match the National Park System “Designation” with the appropriate description. One **LETTER** is NOT USED.

Designation	Description
_____ National Park	A. Trails or routes established by historic use.
_____ National Historic Site	B. Preserves at least one significant historical or scientific resource.
_____ National Memorial	C. Commemorates a historic person or episode.
_____ National Monument	D. These are either centered on large water reservoirs or near major population centers and provide recreational opportunities.
_____ National Recreation Area	E. Preserve natural values and provide water-orientated recreation.
_____ National Seashore	F. Long distance foot paths winding through areas of natural beauty.
_____ National Preserve	G. Intended for scenic motoring along a protected corridor.
_____ National Military Park	H. Contains a variety of resources and includes a large land or water area.
_____ National Scenic River	I. Preserve places and commemorate persons, events, and activities important in the nation’s history.
_____ National Parkway	J. Preserve and commemorate places associated with military history.
_____ National Scenic Trail	K. Preserve ribbons of land bordering on free-flowing streams.
_____ National Historic Trail	L. These places are commemorative of a historic person or event and need not occupy a site historically connected to the subject.
	M. To preserve and protect important natural, cultural, and historic places for future generations.

Reading Comprehension—Matching Exercise--**Rubric**

Match the National Park System “Designation” with the appropriate description. One **LETTER** is NOT USED.

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__ H __ National Park	A. Trails or routes established by historic use.
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__ D __ National Recreation Area	E. Preserve natural values and provide water-orientated recreation
__ E __ National Seashore	F. Long distance foot paths winding through areas of natural beauty
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	M. To preserve and protect important natural, cultural, and historic places for future generations.

Reading Comprehension—Short Answer

National Park Sites _____ areas of land to _____ their natural beauty or historical or cultural significance.

The first National Park was _____.

Currently there are _____ places in the United States that have been designated as national park sites.

America's tallest mountain is in the state of _____.

America's greatest symbol of hope and freedom is in _____.

Ancestral Puebloans stored their harvest in _____.

National park sites are one way to be sure beautiful and historic places will be _____ and _____ for future Americans.

In 1916 Congress passed a law creating the National Park _____ to manage all the places in the National Park _____.

The President can create a National Monument to preserve and protect a historic or scientific place on land already owned by the national government by making a _____.

There are national park sites in _____ states and in American Samoa, _____, _____, and the _____ Islands.

A _____ is intended to _____ at least one significant historical or scientific resource.

Well over _____ of the sites in the National Park System _____ places and commemorate persons, events, and activities important in the nation's history. Most often these sites are named a National _____ Site or a National _____ Park.

A _____ is commemorative of a historic person or place.

National Historic Trails are _____ established by historic use and are historically significant with respect to a large facet of American History.

Reading Comprehension—Short Answer--Rubric

National Park Sites ____protect____ areas of land to ____preserve____ their natural beauty or historical or cultural significance.

The first National Park was ____Yellowstone_____.

Currently there are ____388__ places in the United States that have been designated as national park sites.

America's tallest mountain is in the state of ____Alaska_____.

America's greatest symbol of hope and freedom is in ____New York Harbor_____.

Ancestral Puebloans stored their harvest in ____granaries_____.

National park sites are one way to be sure beautiful and historic places will be ____preserve____ and ____protect____ for future Americans.

In 1916 Congress passed a law creating the National Park ____Service_____ to manage all the places in the National Park ____System_____.

The President can create a National Monument to preserve and protect a historic or scientific place on land already owned by the national government by making a ____proclamation_____.

There are national park sites in __49__ states and in American Samoa, __Guam____, __Puerto Rico____, and the __Virgin____ Islands.

A __National Monument__ is intended to __preserve__ at least one significant historical or scientific resource.

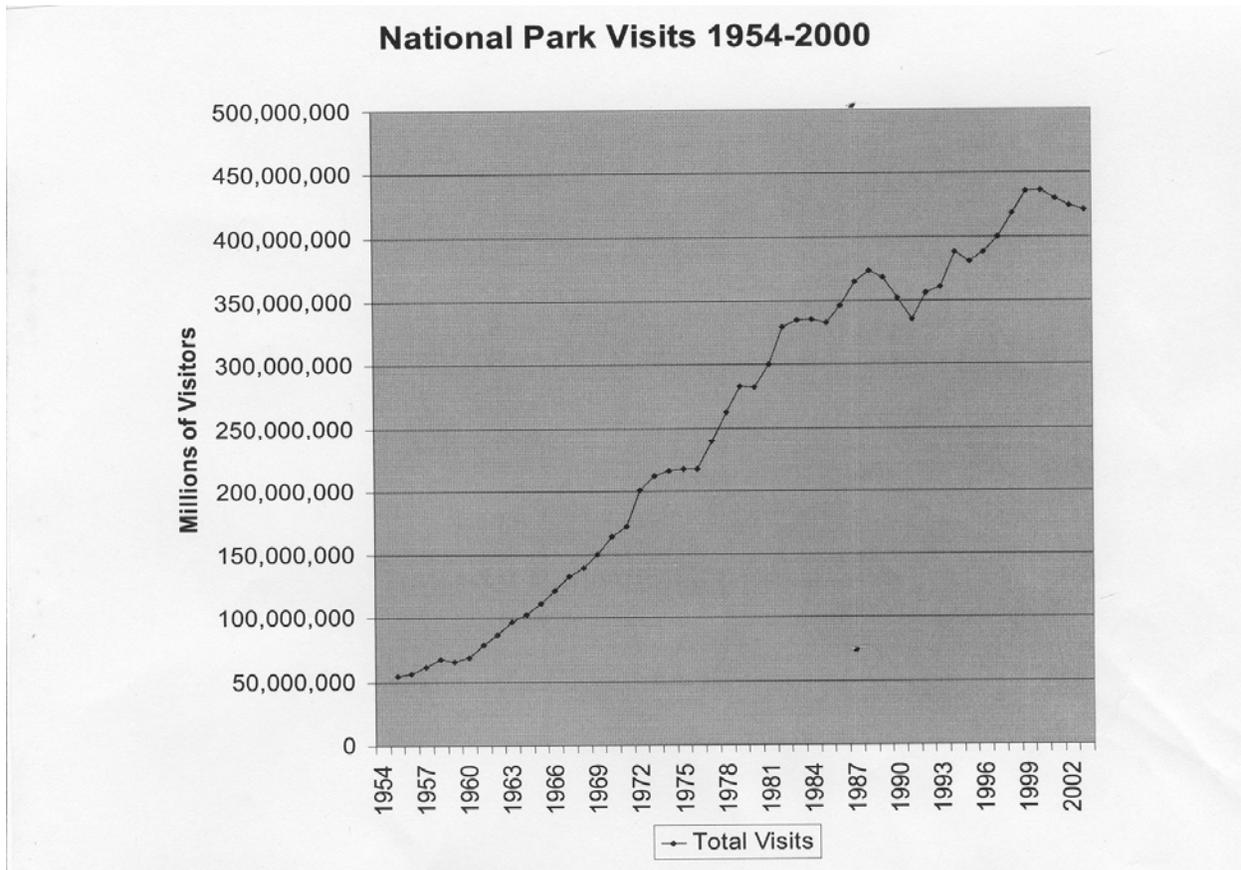
Well over __half__ of the sites in the National Park System ____preserve____ places and commemorate persons, events, and activities important in the nation's history. Most often these sites are named a National __Historic__ Site or a National __Historical__ Park.

A ____National Memorial_____ is commemorative of a historic person or place.

National Historic Trails are ____trails_____ established by historic use and are historically significant with respect to a large facet of American History.

Chart Activity

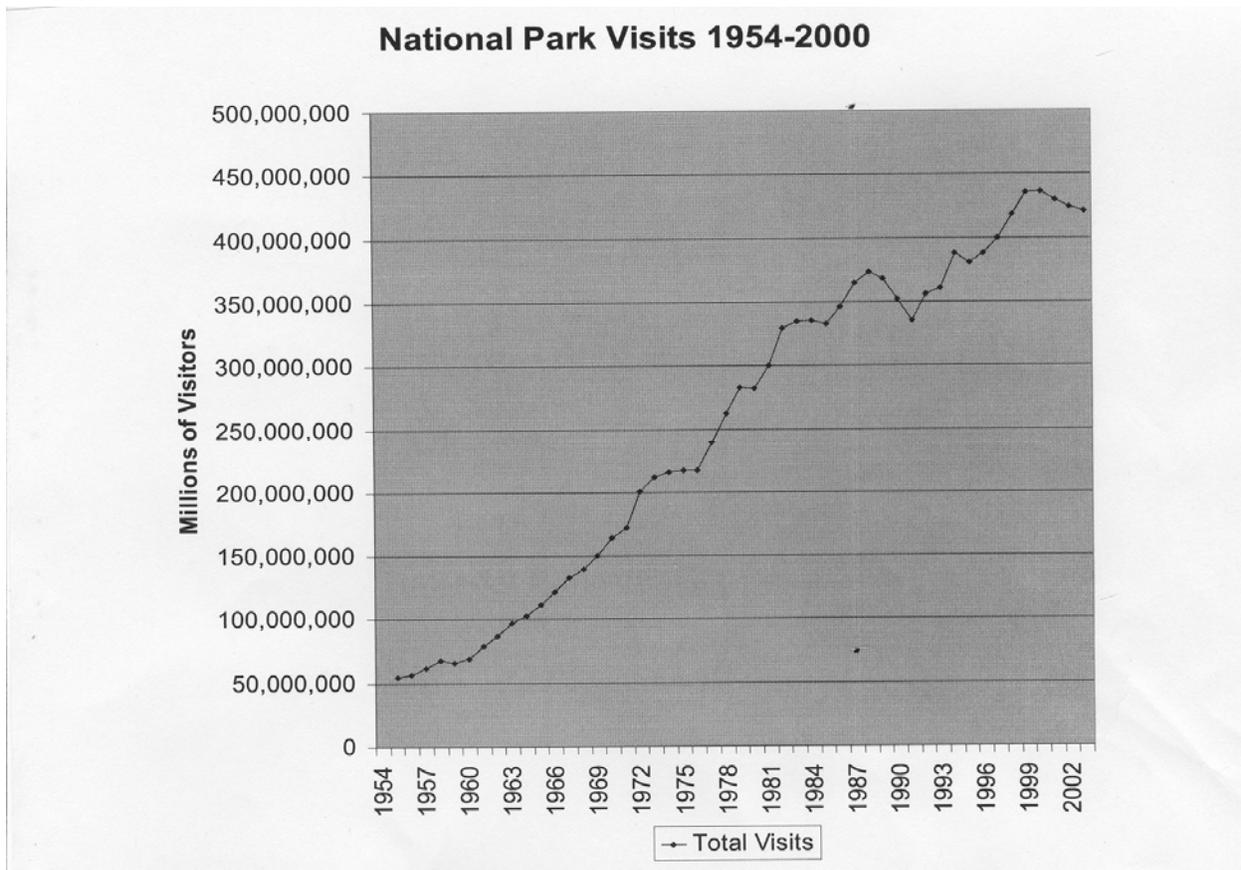
ASSIGNMENT: Look at the chart and answer the questions below.



1. How many people visited National Parks in 1957? Slightly over _____
2. In 1966? Over _____
3. In 1975? Over _____
4. In 1984? Slightly under _____
5. In 1990? Slightly under _____
6. In 1999? Almost _____
7. During what time period did visitation show the greatest decline? _____
8. Did more people visit National Parks in 2002 than did in 1999? _____
9. Which of the following best describes the increase in visitation _____
 - a. It has been steady
 - b. It greatly increased in the 1950's and 1960's but it has leveled off since then
 - c. Visitation grew very rapidly in the 1970's, otherwise there has been very little change
10. Is this statement true or false? There has never been any decline in visitation.

Chart Activity--Rubric

ASSIGNMENT: Look at the chart and answer the questions below.



1. How many people visited National Parks in 1957? Slightly over 50,000,000
2. In 1966? Over 100,000,000
3. In 1975? Over 200,000,000
4. In 1984? Slightly under 350,000,000
5. In 1990? Slightly under 350,000,000
6. In 1999? Almost 450,000,000
7. During what time period did visitation show the greatest decline? 1987-1990
8. Did more people visit National Parks in 2002 than did in 1999? No
9. Which of the following best describes the increase in visitation a
 - a. It has been steady.
 - b. It greatly increased in the 1950's and 1960's but it has leveled off since then.
 - c. Visitation grew very rapidly in the 1970's, otherwise there has been very little change.
10. Is this statement true or false? There has never been any decline in visitation.
False

Teacher Page

The Flesch-Kinkaid reading Level is 10th Grade.

Educational Objectives: The student will be able to:

1. Define the purpose of the National Park System [to preserve and protect important natural, cultural, and historical places for future generations].
2. Describe the different kinds of National Park sites.

Illinois Learning Standards:

English/Language Arts:

State Goal 1 Read with understanding and fluency

State Goal 3 Write to communicate for a variety of purposes

Social Science:

State Goal 16 Understanding events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations

Late Elementary 16E2b [US] Identify individuals and events in the development of the conservation movement including John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and the creation of the National Park System

Late Elementary 17C2c Explain how human activity affects the environment.