

Create a National Park

Subject: Science, English

Duration: 1- 1 1/2 hours

Location: Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: National park, natural resources, cultural resources

Related Activities: Locating South Florida National Parks; What's So Special About the Everglades?; Where Have Our Plants and Animals Gone?; We're Sponging off the Everglades

Florida Sunshine State Standards: LA.4.4.2.5, LA.4.4.3.1, LA.5.4.2.5, LA.5.4.3.1, LA.6.4.2.5, LA.6.4.3.1



Objectives: The student 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, and d) analyze the information learned and write a persuasive proposal for a national park designation.

Method: Students create a mini-national park in a specified outdoor area, marking a nature trail and providing visitors with information about their park.

Background: There are 401 national park areas in the national park system. They have been set aside by Congress to preserve and protect the best of our natural, recreational, and cultural resources for the use and enjoyment of all persons, including future generations.

For this lesson, we will be discussing parks set aside for their natural wonders. These parks are as diverse as the visitors who come to them. A park may offer any one or a combination of the following: Camping (tent or motor home), wilderness hiking trails, scenic overlooks, motor tour routes, nature trails, campfire programs, boat/tram tours, bike trails, canoeing, fishing and hunting (recreational parks), boardwalks, rock climbing, and swimming.

A park may have several outstanding natural features for which it was set aside, or it may be preserved for a specific site. Park management is set up much like a school system, the rangers being the teachers. Each day brings new challenges to a park and its resources. Some parks, like Everglades National Park, have numerous problems facing them. At Everglades National Park, there are a combination of problems: water quality and quantity, exotic species, destruction of habitat, and the list goes on.

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 South Florida's National Parks"

Suggested Procedure

1. Discuss the concept of a national park with your students. Ask students if they have ever been to a national park. What makes it different from a state park or a county park?
2. Ask students 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 students. Distribute the materials listed on the preceding page 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. Students 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 class about 20-25 minutes to set up the trails in their park. After the students 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 students) must advertise their park. They should advertise their park by shouting out its attributes. Ask the pairs to split up. One student in the pair should remain in the park to interpret it, while the second visits other national parks. The students may then switch. The peanuts are the entrance fee needed to visit another national park. Every student must visit at least one national park.
8. After they have visited the national parks, ask students 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 student a copy “Owner’s Manual to South Florida’s National Parks.” Have them sign it once they understand their responsibilities.
- Ask the music teacher to lead the students in the singing of the song “This Park is Your Park” (p. 216).
- Write a proposal to get funding to buy a national park. Presentations should be made to the “President” (teacher or principal).



Owner's Manual to South Florida's National Parks

Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, and Dry Tortugas National Park were established to assure protection of their unique flora and fauna, 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 the park 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 birds, reptiles, insects, mammals and plants. The parks are a refuge for people too; a special place to visit, where the wonders of nature can be discovered first hand.

What are the drawbacks of ownership?

Your parks are in trouble! Their resources are threatened each day. Things like water quality and quantity, introduction of exotic plants and animals, and a long list of endangered species are just a few of the 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. On the next page are a few things you can do to help preserve and protect your parks. One word of warning: Taking on this ownership means you could possibly become addicted to the love of 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. Be a fulltime water conservationist. Learn ways to conserve water in your home and community. It will help South Florida's wildlife.
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 a threat to the South Florida ecosystem.
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)