

Fires of 1918 Lesson 1: Experiencing Disaster

Grade Level:

6-8

Subject Areas:

Minnesota History, Social Studies, Technology or Digital Media, Language Arts, and Art.

MN State Standards:

Social Studies Standards

8.3.3.6.1 Describe how the physical and environmental features of the United States and Canada affect human activity and settlement. For example: Physical and environmental features—climate, landforms, distribution of resources, waterways, ecosystems

History Standards

6.4.1.2.1 Pose questions about a topic in Minnesota history, gather a variety of primary and secondary sources related to questions, analyze sources for credibility, identify possible answers, use evidence to draw conclusions, and present supported findings.

English Language Arts Standards

Speaking, Viewing, Listening, and Media Benchmarks

6.9.2.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

6.9.5.5-7.9.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

6.9.8.8-7.9.8.8 As an individual or in collaboration, create an artistic or entertaining multimedia work or a piece of digital communication or contribute to an online collaboration for a specific purpose.

Writing Benchmarks

6.7.2.2-8.7.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Arts Standards

6.2.1.2.1 Create original works of media art in a variety of artistic contexts.

Materials:

Fires of 1918 DVD and DVD player

Computers/laptops/tablets for students

Scissors, markers, construction paper, poster board, glue sticks

Objectives:

- Students focus on the human experience related to the Fires of 1918.
- Students prepare a class poster to organize ideas presented in the Fires of 1918 documentary.
- Students interview relatives or community members about a local disaster that had a major impact on the community.
- Students produce a podcast using stories collected from relatives and community members about this impactful event.

Procedure:

Day 1: Talking About Natural Disasters

- Begin by asking students if they have ever been through a natural disaster, such as a flood, tornado, violent electrical storm, or hurricane.
 - Ask a few students to briefly share their experiences with the class. Have these students talk about what they saw, and how they felt during or after the disaster.
 - Allow all students to write a paragraph or two about their own experience with a natural disaster. If any student has not been through one of these events, have them write about an event they remember happening somewhere else. (10-15 minutes)
- Introduce the *Fires of 1918* documentary as a history of a terrible disaster in northeastern Minnesota. Inform students that the people that experienced the disaster never forgot it, and told many stories about it. Some of their stories will be told in the documentary. Tell students to listen for these stories as they watch the documentary, and to write down the ones that interest them the most. Then show the first half of the documentary. (30 minutes)

Day 2: Remembering the Fires of 1918

- Have students finish watching the documentary. Remind students to write down stories that interest them as they watch. (30 minutes)
- When the documentary is finished, tell each student to choose two stories about the fires that they would like to share. Have them pair up to share these stories. Provide each pair with scissors, markers, and construction paper. Have them write a statement or quote on different sheets of construction paper to represent each of the stories they have shared. They have them organize these sheets on a large class poster about the Fires of 1918, to hang on the wall. (15-20 minutes)

Day 3: Listening to Other Stories

- Revisit the statements and quotes on the Fires of 1918 poster. Tell students that collecting stories about an event is one way to preserve the event's history. Remind students of some of the stories they had told about natural disasters before they watched the documentary. *(5 minutes)*
- Tell students they will now focus on one local natural disaster and collect community stories about it. They will then organize parts of these stories into a podcast.
 - As a class, discuss natural disaster events that have occurred in your community. These events can be recent or farther back in the past, but make sure that they are not so far back that no one living experienced them.
 - Decide on one event for the class to focus on.
 - Identify people that students can interview. These could be public officials, relatives, friends of parents, or other community members. Try to identify at least five people to interview.
 - Divide the class into small groups. Each group will either conduct an interview or research newspapers and other resources to gather information about the event. *(10-15 minutes)*
- Allow class time for groups to put together interview questions or begin researching the event. Interview questions should focus on the following:
 - what was happening before the disaster;
 - how anyone knew the disaster was coming;
 - what was happening during the disaster;
 - how the person felt during the disaster; and
 - what was happening after the disaster. *(25-30 minutes)*
- Give student groups a few days to conduct interviews or research. Have groups record interviews and also write any information down. Audio recordings from interviews will be used for the podcast.

Day 4: Presenting Stories

- Give students class time to choose sound clips from interviews, record audio information about the event from newspaper articles, and organize all audio into a podcast about the local disaster event. This podcast can be shared with the rest of the school, the local historical society, and the rest of the community. *(45-50 minutes)*