

## **Fires of 1918 Lesson 3: Escaping the Flames**

### **Grade Level:**

9-12

### **Subject Areas:**

U.S. History, Minnesota History, Technology or Digital Media, Language Arts, Art, and Science.

### **MN State Standards:**

#### ***History Standards***

9.4.1.2.1 Pose questions about a topic in history, suggest possible answers and write a thesis; locate and organize primary and secondary sources, analyze sources for credibility and bias; corroborate information across the sources; use sources to support or refute the thesis; and present supported findings.

#### ***English Language Arts Standards***

##### ***Speaking, Viewing, Listening, and Media Benchmarks***

9.9.5.5 and 11.9.5.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

##### ***Writing Benchmarks***

9.7.2.2-11.7.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

#### ***Arts Standards***

9.2.1.5.1 Create a single, complex artwork or multiple artworks to express ideas.

#### ***Science Standards***

9.1.2.1.2 Recognize that risk analysis is used to determine the potential positive and negative consequences of using a new technology or design, including the evaluation of causes and effects of failures. *For example:* Risks and benefits associated with using lithium batteries.

### **Materials:**

*Fires of 1918* DVD and DVD player

Poster board, markers, paint, colored pencils

### **Objectives:**

- Students annotate maps to explore the extent of the geographical area affected by the Fires of 1918.

- Students envision ways of surviving the Fires of 1918, based on geographical location.
- Students use writing and art to explore the experiences of people who lived through the Fires of 1918.

## **Procedure:**

### **Day 1: Understanding the Extent of the Fires of 1918**

- Distribute copies of a topographic map of northeastern Minnesota to pairs of students. This map should include the communities of Moose Lake, Kettle River, Floodwood, Brookston, Cloquet, Saginaw, Twig, Hermantown, Duluth, French River, Superior, and other surrounding communities.
  - Ask students if they have ever been to any of these areas. If some have, ask them to describe what the areas look like now.
  - Have students draw straight lines on the map to form a triangle, with the cities of Floodwood, Moose Lake, and French River as its points. Have students use the map scale to measure the sides of this triangle and calculate its rough area.
  - Tell students that much of the area they have outlined was affected by huge fires in 1918. (10-15 minutes)
- Introduce the *Fires of 1918* documentary as a history of a terrible disaster in northeastern Minnesota. This disaster affected around 52,000 people in the area, leaving many people homeless, and causing almost 500 people to lose their lives. Tell students to record how the fires spread on their map as they watch the first 30 minutes of the documentary. Tell students to also mark down times when the fire reached each area, when possible. (30-35 minutes)

### **Day 2: Moving Across the Landscape**

- Have students get out their maps. As they watch the rest of the documentary, have students continue to fill in all the areas on the map that experienced fire. (30-35 minutes)
- When the documentary is finished, have student pairs look at their maps and answer the following questions.
  - In what directions did the fire spread?
  - How much area did the fire burn?
  - How long did it take the fire to spread (approximately)?
  - About how fast did the fire move (approximately)? (10-15 minutes)
- When pairs are done talking about how the fire spread, have them choose a place on the map, within the fire triangle they have drawn. The place could be a town or a rural area far away from a town. Ask each pair to make a star on their map to indicate that place. (5 minutes)

### **Day 3: Surviving the Fire**

- Have student pairs take out their maps and find the place they have marked with a star. Tell them to imagine that they lived in that place on October 12, 1918, the date of the catastrophic fires. Have them discuss and write down answers for the following:
  - Where would they be living (i.e., in a farmhouse, in a house in town, etc.)?
  - What would they see before the fires reached them?
  - How would they know about the fires (i.e., would anyone be able to warn them)?
  - What kind of action would they take to survive the fires (i.e., would they try to escape or try to survive where they were)?
  - What would they see during the fires?
  - What would they do after the fires were out? *(15-20 minutes)*
- Working alone, have each student produce an illustrated poem or short story based on some or all of their answers to the questions above. Illustrations could be drawings or paintings. Encourage students to use stories they remember from the documentary, as well as their own imagination and experiences, to try to capture what someone might have experienced before, during, or after the fires. *(25-30 minutes)*

### **Day 4: Discussing Experiences**

- Provide students more time to work on their illustrated poems or short stories. Some students may wish to mount their written works and illustrations on poster board. *(10-15 minutes)*
- Allow students to read and view each other's work. Encourage students that would like to read their work aloud to do so. *(15-20 minutes)*
- Have a class discussion about the common themes expressed in the student work, and how they relate to the real stories presented in the Fires of 1918 documentary. *(10-15 minutes)*