

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness 101/Lesson 2 (OPTION 1)

How did we get from no word for wilderness to wilderness preservation?

Goal:

- Begin building a basic understanding of what wilderness is by comparing wild, wilderness-like landscapes, and designated wilderness.

Investigation Objectives

Audience: 9-12 grades.

- Students will understand the difference between wild, wilderness (not designated), and Wilderness (designated). (Behavior)
- Students will create a creative interpretation of the concepts/ideas presented within the first page of the Wilderness Act. (Condition)
- Students will explore and discuss how we went from *no word for wilderness* to pushing back wilderness landscapes to preserving wilderness. (Degree)

Common Core Standard Connections

NOTE: See Common Core Standards sections to see listed objectives for this and other lessons/activities.

Time Requirement: 50 minutes

Materials/Resources Needed and Pre-Investigation Tasks

- Classroom setting
- Materials for creating student projects (posterboard, markers, access to the Internet, etc.)

Teacher Background

The word **wilderness** is one of those tricky English words that, in addition to multiple dictionary listings, mean different things to different people depending on their personal experiences, age, background, culture, geographic location, and so forth. During this investigation you will explore some of those meanings. For the purposes of these Wilderness Investigations we will bring students to the following (as used in the *Wilderness Act* itself):

“A wilderness... is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain.” [Section 2.(c)]

When non-Native people arrived and stayed in what is now the United States they found what must have seemed, to them, a vast, untouched wilderness. By their European standards, it certainly would have seemed that way. Most were probably unable to grasp the reality that millions of people had for thousands of years (and did at time of contact) called this wilderness landscape home. Even today some think of pre-European Native People as living on the land and having little or no recognizable impact on *the wilderness*. However, with a little investigative work, we find that many more people lived here than previously believed. Many cultures had, in fact, by the effect of their sheer numbers or because they found ways to use the land to their advantage, *civilized* much of the landscape. That is to say, much of the land was not free of humans. Native People called these places home. Many Native People did and still do live in a way that is respectful and has a low impact on the land, but humans have and always will impact wilderness. According to Tony Incashola, Director of the Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee in western Montana, most Native Peoples, past and present, viewed themselves as part of the landscape whether wilderness or not. “In the past, Native People had no word or mental construct for wilderness,” stated Tony during a recent conversation (June 2011). “The people were part of the landscape and drew few distinctions between themselves and their place. That’s why so many *newcomers* missed our ancestors. They simply didn’t stand out. They fit in.”

During this investigation, students will be introduced to and/or review historic land uses in what are now the United States pre-1964. They will then look at some of the leading voices of the late 19th and early/middle 20th Centuries who called for some sort of federal wilderness preservation. Some of the names are familiar: John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold to name a few. Some are less familiar: Mardy Muirie, Arthur Carhart, Benton MacKaye come to mind. These visionary citizens, plus many more, worked hard to bring our country around to the ultimate intersection of land use and wilderness preservation.

In 1964 Congress passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed the *Wilderness Act*. In this investigation students will learn about or review the legislative process and then study parts of this landmark wilderness designation. Take some time to study the *Wilderness Act* (see WI Appendix for a copy) before you begin this investigation and identify areas that you don’t want your students to overlook.

Step-by-Step Presentation Instructions

What's Wilderness?

- Remind students of the *What's Wild?* Lesson/activity (if you chose to facilitate it).
- Write WILDERNESS on the board.
- Ask: What images, words, phrases, feelings does this word bring to mind?
 - List on board.
- Share wilderness experiences and let them do the same.
- Wilderness has been and is, to many, a place where special/significant things happen:
 - Vision quests/transition times;
 - Spiritual enlightenment;
 - Sanctuary;
 - Challenges.

Wilderness Timeline Part 1: Native People

- When Europeans reached North America AND STAYED what did they find?
 - Different cultures (maybe 30 million or more!)
 - New plants and animals;
 - Wilderness
- An Elder from the Flathead Reservation, Tony Incashola, says that his people, the Salish, didn't have a word for wilderness until 100 years or so ago. There was no need, rather, those wild lands we and some of our ancestors might consider *wilderness* were just part of the ancestral landscape/homeland.

Wilderness Timeline Part 2: Landscape Newcomers

- BUT those newcomers from Europe often viewed wilderness as something scary, in need of conquering, to be removed to make way for their needs (farming, building, etc.).
 - Wilderness was seen as something to get rid of and also something endless.

Wilderness Timeline Part 3: The Wilderness Act (1964)

- Fast forward to 1964 and we find the Congress of the U.S. unanimously passing a law that was then signed by the President preserving and protecting some of the nation's wilderness.
- Ask: What happened between 1492 & 1964?
 - In small groups, have students brainstorm changes that may have taken place that would have impacted individuals, cultures, landscapes, wildlife, etc.

- Discuss as a whole class.
- We'll explore these events later.
- Share the Wilderness Act story:
 - From early in U.S. history voices like Henry David Thoreau and later John Muir began articulating a view that wild places should be preserved before they were permanently altered.
 - A variety of individuals (Aldo Leopold, Mardy Murie, Bob Marshall, Arthur Carhart and many others) and organizations (The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, etc.) were interested in having federal laws to protect and preserve wilderness.
 - Howard Zahniser (Wilderness Society) begins draft legislation writing in 1956.
 - 65+ drafts/revisions later the final version takes shape.
 - Senate passes unanimously (twice) and when it finally reaches the House of Representatives is passed with only 1 dissenting vote.
 - President Lyndon Johnson signed the legislation into law in September 1964.
- ACTIVITY: What does the Wilderness Act say?
 - Hand out copies of page 1 and have students study (see Appendix for a hard copy of the entire Wilderness Act or go to Wilderness.net for an electronic copy.
 - Capture key words, concepts, and sentences.
 - Organize student teams:
 - Your task: Come up with a creative way to communicate the classes feelings about wilderness AND what the Wilderness Act has to say about wilderness. This may be as simple as a poster or as complex as a creative dance. Stress the need to be thoughtful, accurate, and creative.
- Teams present.

Extension Ideas

- Go to the Wilderness heroes section of this material and go in-depth about some of the characters mentioned in this lesson.