

L597: Information and Instructional Collaboration with Museums

Assignment: Information Resource Sharing

Virtual Field Trips for 5th and 6th grade Social Studies

By Abbie Anderson, for [classmate]

1. Directories for Virtual Field Trips

1.1. Tramline

Home page: <http://www.field-trips.org>

Field Trip List: <http://www.tramline.com/trips.htm>

Tramline sells field-trip building software that uses a framing device to guide students through the experience while providing directions, questions, and encouragement for exploring each web destination. To promote the software, they offer free use of sample field trips that teachers have designed with Tramline. Most of the field trips also include a teacher's guide with additional background information, lesson plans and activity suggestions. In addition, Tramline sponsors a FIELDTRIP discussion list hosted on Yahoo! (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fieldtrip>), where teachers can swap virtual field trip ideas. Unfortunately, the list is not very active, with the most recent post as of this writing over six weeks old.

Field trips suitable for 5th and 6th grade Social Studies standards in Indiana include The Dark Ages, Leonardo da Vinci, and Shakespeare, Christmas Worldwide, Iditarod and My America. The field trips take you on wide-ranging web expeditions, and feature some ingenious resources both scholarly and fun (check out the Mona Lisa morphing project on the da Vinci trip). These trips may look more like Web Quests than field trips (an issue which Tramline attempts to address on the site), but are very much worth using in class.

1.2. The "OOPS" Virtual Field Trip Page

Home page: <http://oops.bizland.com/vtours.htm>

Teachers may already be familiar with OOPS, "Our Overnight Planning System" of ready resources for educators. This page of virtual tours, like much of OOPS, features some great helps but without much organization—which somewhat defeats the site's mission to provide "just-in-time" solutions for harried teachers. It can be hard to find what you need on these busy pages, although they are kept up-to-date and offer a valuable service.

On the field trip page, the trips are presented by title in alphabetical order, with no attempt or ability to sort by subject area, geographical region, historical period, or grade level. That said, however, there is a great deal here for building a good resource guide organized for a particular interest.

1.3. Teaching with Historic Places (National Register of Historic Places)

Home page: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm>

The National Parks Service has done excellent work collaborating with teachers to build rich field trip curricula. At this site they offer free of charge more than 115 thoughtfully designed, well-presented online lesson plans, which can be pursued with your class on the web or printed out in hard copy. The lesson plans include tips for a physical visit to the site, but also link to the park web site, where additional virtual field trip experiences and lessons are often available. The lessons are designed for grades 5-12.

The lesson plans can be browsed by location/state; theme/topic; time period; National Standards for History; or Curriculum Standards for Social Standards. Each plan includes maps, readings, and photographs, as well as exploratory assignments. Not surprisingly, the plans here address 5th grade Indiana standards (which focus on pre-Colonial and Revolutionary American history up to 1800) more than 6th grade (which focus on Ancient Europe through the Renaissance, and the major cultures of Central and South America). Although not designed as field trips per se, these lesson plans provide excellent material for exploring the world of a particular historical site even if you can't travel to San Antonio or Bunker Hill.

1.4. Dig Magazine Online: Links

Home page: <http://www.digonsite.com/links.html>

Dig is the premiere archaeology magazine for kids. Their links page, regularly updated, points to some terrific resources, some of them virtual and some of them for physical sites that offer various programs. These links actively support both 5th grade and 6th grade historical and geographical standards.

1.5. The Archaeology Channel

Home page: <http://www.archaeologychannel.org>

If you have high-speed Internet connections in your classroom or school, and access to either Windows Media Player or Real Player, don't overlook this excellent center for streaming video tours of archaeological subjects throughout the world. Videos may be as short as eight minutes or as long as 21 minutes. Audio material is available as well, in the form of scholarly commentaries, interviews with archaeologists, and even a reading of a traditional Creation story from Oregon.

1.6. Indiana Academic Standards: Resources by Subject and Grade

5th grade: <http://www.indianastandardsresources.org/completeResource.asp?Subject=soc&Grade=5>

6th grade: <http://www.indianastandardsresources.org/completeResource.asp?Subject=soc&Grade=6&Standard=>

Teachers should not need to be directed to these resources—but it probably doesn't hurt to make the reminder. These pages offer extensive materials via PDF and HTML (i.e., web-sites), pointing the way to some really terrific stuff as well as stuff designed particularly to meet Indiana standards.

2. Virtual Field Trips for 5th Grade Social Studies

2.1. Archaeology at Crow Canyon: Archaeology for Kids

Home page: <http://www.crowcanyon.org/kids.html>

This site on archaeology of the ancient Southwest currently offers two virtual explorations: “Woods Canyon Pueblo” and “Life of the Edge”. Highly recommended. Standards: 5.1.1 and 5.1.3.

2.2. Home of the Past: The Archaeology of an Iroquoian Longhouse

Home page: <http://www.rom.on.ca/digs/longhouse/index.html>

The Royal Ontario Museum sponsors this online profile of an archaeology project recreating the lifeways of an Iroquoian village. The site is in Canada, but reflects the same Iroquoian technology and culture that Europeans met in the American colonies. A field trip to this site supports not only understanding of Iroquoian culture both pre- and

post-contact, but the political developments that involved the Iroquois in the Revolutionary War.

2.3. Colonial Williamsburg

Home page: <http://www.history.org/trips>

Be forewarned when you visit this website: every page you click to regarding the electronic field trip program begins with a loud audio introduction that plays automatically as soon as you navigate there. Despite this inexplicable discourtesy in the web design, the Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trip (EFT) program is a remarkable one. These are interactive distance learning programs rather than web-based experiences, but the lesson plans designed to accompany the day of broadcast draw on a variety of resources. Once you register for one of the EFTs, you receive access to some very snazzy Web Adventures, for instance, as well as a package of teaching materials and facsimiles of original documents and prints.

Seven different EFTs are offered for 2004-2005, exploring topics in history, geography, government and economics. Fees are \$120 per school, or \$500 for all seven (although subscribing to all seven could well define your entire school year), plus a \$15 shipping charge for teacher materials.

The lessons are very impressive, and the \$120 fee is reasonable for an entire school. The interactive broadcast itself features dramatic reenactments and Q&A sessions with historians. Electronic communications with Colonial Williamsburg historians and fellow students around the world throughout the arc of the lessons (not just the day of broadcast) are also part of the package. The broadcast itself is accessible via PBS stations, cable operators, and satellite links. Certainly worth pursuing for schools with the required resources.

3. Virtual Field Trips for 6th Grade Social Studies

3.1. VRoma: A Virtual Community for Teaching and Learning Classics

Home page: <http://www.vroma.org>

Don't miss this chance to "visit" ancient Rome! The site creates a rich role-playing environment that blends students' love of exploring electronic worlds with outstanding historical material and inventive learning vectors. Indiana Standards 6.1.2, 4.

3.2. Virtual Inca Trail: The Inca Trail and Machu Picchu

Home page:

<http://www.raingod.com/angus/Gallery/Photos/SouthAmerica/Peru/IncaTrail/>

This website attempts to recreate the experience of actually hiking the Inca Trail in Peru (a four-day trip in real life). More like a real-world field trip, using this site will require more prep and follow-up by the teacher than many other online resources that provide their own lesson plans. The photos and information are clearly presented in a good, clean design (just remember to click on the pictures for bigger views). Indiana Standard 6.1.13.