

LESSON NINE: DAILY LIFE

Enduring understandings:

Studying the day-to-day lives of people who lived in the past gives us a better understanding of our own lives.

Essential questions:

How were the lives of people in the 1940s different from modern times?

How do photographs help us understand the lives of people who lived in the past?

TEKS:

- 7.7 understand how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the 20th century
- 7.12 (A) explain economic factors that led to the urbanization of Texas
- 7.12 (C) explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas
- 7.20 (A) compare types and uses of technology, past and present
- 7.20 (F) make predictions about economic, social, and environmental consequences that may result from future scientific discoveries and technological innovations
- 7.21 (A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas
- 7.21 (B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions

Materials:

1. Overhead projector
2. Students' completed copies of Exploring Themes in *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* handout

Objectives:

- Students will identify ways that photography helps historians understand the lives of people who lived in the past.
- Students will use images from Russell Lee's photo essay *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* to compare and contrast their own lives to the lives of Mexican-Americans in the 1940s.
- Students will analyze how Texas' change from an agrarian to an urban society has impacted the lives of Texans.

Anticipatory set:

Ask students to describe a typical day of their lives. What activities are they involved in? What groups do they belong to? What places do they visit during their day? What people are the most important in their lives? What technological devices do they use?

Procedure:

Explain to students:

With *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas*, Russell Lee was not trying to capture a major event such as a war or a presidential election. Instead, he took pictures of the daily lives of Mexican-Americans in Texas during the 1940s.

Engage students in a discussion about photography's ability to document the daily lives of ordinary people, asking:

- In our lesson about the photo essay, we studied the subjects that Russell Lee focused on in his photo essay. What aspects of ordinary life did he focus on in his photo essay?
- Why do you think Russell Lee wanted to focus on people's ordinary lives rather than major events?
- Why do we study the daily lives of people who lived in the past?
- Why are photographs one of the best primary sources for studying people's lives? What can be captured in a photograph that cannot be demonstrated in other primary sources?
- What other primary sources do historians use to study the daily lives of people who lived in the past?
- If a photographer wanted to document your daily life, what should he or she photograph?
- What similarities do you expect to find between your own life and the lives of the people documented in *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas*?
- What differences do you expect to find?

Pass out students' completed copies of Exploring Themes in *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* handouts. Explain to students that for each image chosen in the handout, they will identify one similarity and one difference between the lives of the people in the photographs and their own lives. When students have completed the assignment, call the class together to discuss their findings. Ask students to identify similarities and differences they found, and record their findings on the overhead.

Expand the discussion, asking students:

- Consider what is missing from the Russell Lee images. Did you see cell phones, computers, or televisions in the pictures? Why not? How does the technological change impact the way people spend their leisure time?
- How would the absence of these technological devices change your life?
- In which of the subjects that Russell Lee documented does life seem to have changed the least? Family life? Education? Why do you think this aspect of daily life has not changed very much?
- In which of the photo essay's subjects does life seem to have changed the most? What do you think has caused this change?
- How do you think life was easier during the 1940s? How was it harder?
- What generalizations can you make about the way people's occupations have changed? How have jobs changed as Texas transitioned from an agrarian to an urban economy?
- How do you think life will change for Texans in the next century? What impact do you think technological, economic, and social changes will have on Texans' daily lives? Can you make any predictions for the future?

Next, ask students to write an essay explaining why they would rather live in the 1940s or current times. Students should use their findings from the lesson to support their position. Allow students at least 45 minutes to complete their essays.

Closure:

Review with students how the study of other time periods provides a better understanding their own lives.

Evaluation:

Evaluate students' expanded answers to Exploring Themes in *The Study of the Spanish-Speaking People of Texas* and essays.

Extension:

Students photograph their daily lives and share images with the class.