History Happened in This Classroom

Create Your Own Historical Marker
Activity for Grades 3-5

Why should you use National Historic Marker Day in your classroom?

National Historic Marker Day is a celebration that encourages volunteers across the country to help promote and preserve their history by cleaning historical markers in their communities. This day highlights civic engagement, pride of place, and, in the classroom, it can connect to the content and themes you've covered throughout your social studies curriculum.

Historical markers help students and children realize history happened all around them and commemorate the importance of the history in their community. This lesson plan introduces students to historical markers, then provides educators/guardians with further instruction on how to participate in this national event.

"History Happened in this Class: Designing Your Own Marker"

This short lesson plan is designed to get students thinking about historical markers and the people, places, and things they commemorate while also connecting to 21st-century learning trends with a fun, easy-to-use activity. Included within are:

- Instructions for the educator/guardian
- A worksheet and drawing activity for students to complete
- Information about student involvement in National Historic Marker Day

Components of the lesson involving a computer can be completed as a group using a smartboard or individually by students with access to their own computers. Additionally, the printout for educators/guardians provides more information about how to get involved in National Historic Marker Day, as well as additional activities related to historical markers.

As host of National Historic Marker Day, the William G. Pomeroy Foundation wishes you a happy National Historic Marker Day and invites you to share this lesson plan and supplemental activities with your fellow educators and/or parent network.

**Continue to page 2 for further instructions.*

Create Your Own Marker - Instructor's Guide

Objective: Students will learn about the benefits of historical markers, what primary sources are, and then create their own marker in celebration of National Historic Marker Day!

What Students Will Need: Printed out copy of the worksheet on page 4, a black magic marker, a computer (or smartboard for group instruction).

Activity Directions:

Step 1) Introduce students to historical markers using the Pomeroy Foundation's interactive marker map or on The Historical Marker Database.

This can be accomplished as a class using the smartboard for guided instruction or individually if students have access to their own computers. Select historical marker examples from your state or region of the country. Read the inscriptions to the class. You can invite students to read them as well.

As you view the map, here are a few questions to keep in mind for student engagement:

1. What's the closest marker to your home or your school? Can you find it using the map? This can be done on individual computers or as a group.
2. Why do you think historical markers were made? What subjects do markers commemorate?
3. Where have you seen historical markers before? (e.g. neighborhood, community, on vacation, etc.)

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Step 2) Tell students they're going to create a historical marker for something fun in their lives: it can be a person, place or event significant to them. *What will people in the future be celebrating about them?*

Remind students markers have to be historically proven by primary sources: First, ask students what types of sources historians use to understand and learn about the past (journals, letters, photographs, newspapers, maps, diaries, etc.) Tie this into lessons and activities you've done throughout the year.

Next, ask them what sources historians will use to study historical markers in the future. Will historians use photographs of the person, place or thing they're commemorating? Will there be newspaper articles or books?

Step 3) Using the provided outline, ask students to write a historical marker commemorating their selected person, place or thing. Have them keep it to 2-4 sentences, and remind them to focus on only the most important information. Lastly, where will their marker be placed? Ask them to draw in a background around the marker.

Step 4) Ask students who are comfortable to: read their sign, tell the class what it is about, and what sources they would use to prove it.

Step 5) Lastly, give students our National Historic Marker Day sheet for additional activities they can do with their parent(s)/guardian(s) and volunteer information!

Take a photo of your completed markers and share it on social media using #NationalHistoricMarkerDay. If your school or class registers to volunteer, please email your marker cleaning photos to us at info@wgpfoundation.org. We will share select photos on our social media accounts and you will be entered into our giveaway.

Source List

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Instructions

1) Brainstorm sources and write them in the "source list."

2) Now, take your research and "inscribe"—or write—your marker. Include only the most important information as you can only use 2-4 sentences. Remember, these markers have limited space, so focus on names, dates, and what happened.

3) Lastly, remember to draw the background! What will people see when they visit your marker? A building, a forest, a river...think about your site and what you're commemorating!

NATIONAL HISTORIC MARKER DAY LAST FRIDAY OF APRIL

5 Fun, Kid-Friendly Activities to Celebrate National Historic Marker Day

Mail a Letter to Your Local Historical Society or Museum

History and museum professionals make a difference in our communities. Many of these individuals are involved in helping us to research, understand, interpret, preserve and commemorate history, including by working to obtain and install markers. In recognition of their hard work and in celebration of National Historic Marker Day, work with your students to write a thank-you letter to your local historical society or museum about something you appreciate that they have done for your community.

Develop Your Own Historic Marker Trail

The Historical Marker Database and Pomeroy Foundation's interactive marker map are online resources for locating and learning about historic markers. Work with your students to identify markers of interest in your neighborhood, community or region. What subjects are commemorated? Using these mapped points of interest, work with your students to create a trail of markers they could imagine themselves visiting in real life when participating in National Historic Marker Day.

Create Historic Marker Rubbings

If you are volunteering to clean markers in your community, consider doing a "marker rubbing" with your students to bring home as a keepsake of your efforts. Similar to most stone rubbing activities, you'll need a large sheet of paper (e.g., rice paper), as well as a crayon or charcoal to capture the details on the marker. Approach your setup carefully, especially if the paint on your marker is fragile.

Draw Your Own Marker Design

Historic markers come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some are designed to be roadside markers, while others are mounted to physical structures such as buildings and bridges. Inspire creativity and invite your student to answer the question: What would my historic marker design look like? In this art-focused activity, bring out the pencils, crayons and paper to help your student create a marker. What colors should it be? What shape will you use? Where will it be located?

Write Your Own Marker Inscription

Wouldn't it be fun for students to write a marker inscription about themselves, their community or something they are passionate about? Take this opportunity to encourage student creativity around commemorating a subject of interest. During this activity, provide guidance about why research is important to understand history, as well as the impact markers have on communities.