History Happened in This Classroom

Understanding Community Through Historical Markers
Activity for Junior High and High School Students

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 spotlights civic engagement, pride of place, and, in the classroom, it can connect to the content and themes you've covered throughout your social studies, business or government curriculum by highlighting history, civic involvement and local tourism.

Markers help students and children realize history happened all around them and highlight the importance of their community's history. This lesson plan introduces students to markers, then provides a call to action to participate in National Historic Marker Day by cleaning local markers.

"History Happened Here"

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 to implement this lesson
- Two interconnected activities for students
- Information about how students can get involved with National Historic Marker Day

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As the 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.*

Locating and Promoting Local History - Instructor's Guide

Objective: Students will learn about historical markers and their role in preserving and commemorating local history, how they can be used to promote their community, and learn about participating in National Historic Marker Day!

What Students Will Need: Accompanying worksheets printed out and a computer for research.

Activity Directions:

Step 1) Begin by introducing students to historical markers on the Pomeroy Foundation's interactive marker map or The Historical Marker Database. These online resources will allow students to locate markers across the country. Give them time to explore both. Ask students to find one marker relating to something that interests them or something you're covering in class by searching keywords. Give students time to locate a marker, then ask students to present their selected marker to the class.

Some things to discuss after students look at the interactive map:

1. How might these markers promote tourism?
2. Why might these markers be important to the community at-large?
3. What do these markers commemorate? How could a local business, tourism group or historical society celebrate and promote the people, places and events remembered on historical markers?

Locating and Promoting Local History - Instructor's Guide

Step 2) After students interact with the maps and have the opportunity for class discussion, the next step is to distribute the accompanying two worksheets included below in this lesson plan.

> Using the first worksheet with the map, ask students to identify four markers of their choosing in their own community or in one they want to learn more about. On the blank markers, ask them to write the title, location (GPS coordinates or address), and one sentence detailing what the marker is about. Then have them draw an arrow to the approximate locations of the marker on the primary map of the U.S.

Step 3) Based on their completed worksheet, ask students to use PowerPoint or Google Slides to create a "Slideshow for Visitors" about their selected location. Use the "Student Guide" below for further instruction. The guide provides step-by-step instructions about how to complete each slide. For older students, ask them to hyperlink relevant webpages to the slides and design the slides with marketing in mind. For younger students, have them focus on the content.

Step 4) After students complete their PowerPoint or slides presentation, have them turn it in electronically along with their completed worksheet to be able to evaluate their understanding of the material. Then hand out the accompanying National Historic Marker Day worksheet, which includes additional activities they can complete, as well as further 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.

#NationalHistoricMarkerDay

Directions

1) Using a digital marker map, locate four historic markers in the same area of your choice.

2) Write the title, location (either using the GPS coordinates or address) and a brief one-sentence description about what the marker commemorates.

3) Draw an arrow from the marker to the map with the relative location of the marker. They should all point roughly to the same location.

NATIONAL HISTORIC MARKER DAY LAST FRIDAY OF APRIL

"History Happened Here"
Slideshow for Visitors
Student Guide

Following the instructions below, create a slideshow highlighting the four historical markers you've located along with additional sites and "things-to-do" that might interest a visitor. Think of this as a tourism pamphlet for someone passing through the community who wants to learn more about local history!

Step 1) Welcome to Historic...

- This slide will introduce the visitor to the community. Where are the markers located? Once you have identified their placements, complete the instructions below:
  - Title this slide: **"Welcome to Historic [community name]"**
  - Include two pictures on this slide: one picture of the area, and one of something you think makes this community unique (it could be a historic event, a restaurant, a sport team ...anything you would want someone visiting to know about).

Step 2) Explore Historic Locations such as...

- This slide introduces two markers a visitor might see.
  - Title this slide: **"Explore Historic Locations such as..."**
- Include two text boxes on this page: one of which includes the **title, location and one-sentence description** of **Marker 1** from your worksheet. Include the **same information for Marker 2.**
- Include any relevant pictures you can find on this slide: this can be pictures of the marker itself, or the person, place, thing or event that's commemorated.

Step 3) Explore Even More Historic Locations such as...

- This slide introduces the next two markers a visitor might see.
  - Title this slide: **"Explore Even More Historic Locations such as..."**
- Now repeat the same process for **Markers 3 and 4** on this slide. Make sure to include the same information from the last slide, as well as more relevant images.

Step 4) More Things to do in Historic...

- This slide will introduce visitors to other "spots of interest" in the community.
  - Title this slide: **"More Things to do in Historic [community name]."**
- **Using bullet points, list 4-5 additional sites a tourist might like to explore here.** Make sure to include any local museums, sites, restaurants, or interesting places a visitor may enjoy.
- Include **3-4 pictures** of these "spots of interest."
- Lastly, include text at the bottom of this slide that says: **Thanks for Visiting [community name]!**

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 historical 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 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 historical 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 historical 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

Historical 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. Inspire creativity and invite your student to answer the question: What would my historical 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 Historic 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 historical markers have on communities.