

# Teaching American History Project

## Cemetery Mapping Lesson

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### Grade 8 U.S. History

**Foreword:** With great concern that we have lost and are rapidly losing the priceless links to our communities' histories available through our cemeteries' gravestones...

**Inquiry:** Students will interpret and record vital information from each headstone in a local historical cemetery. Then they will design a map of a local historical cemetery.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will be able to digitally record and manually transcribe vital data to create a historical record.
- Students will demonstrate good citizenship/community service by donating their findings to the town historical society.
- Students will analyze data, discuss trends and patterns, and gain an appreciation and reverence for the micro and macro level of history available in a cemetery.

#### **Materials:**

- Graph paper
- Pencils
- Mirrors
- String/rope
- Stakes
- Clipboards
- Notebooks
- Digital camera
- Measuring tape
- Chalk

#### **Pre-field trip:**

Students will be shown images of sample gravestones, discussing the symbolism and burial customs in early America.

Students will read and discuss the lyrical stylings and religious nature of epitaphs and carvings in different eras.

Students will discuss family sizes, childhood mortality rates and immigration patterns as evidenced by data on headstones.

It is imperative that students understand the sacred nature of a burial ground. Students must be reminded to minimize noise levels, leave no litter, and use extreme caution with regards to the (often fragile and unsteady) headstones.

Students (pre-divided into groups) will alternate to the following tasks:

1. Measurement and mapping- Measuring the size and dimensions of the cemetery as well as setting up a string/rope grid to determine the exact location of each stone in the cemetery to create a map
2. Transcription- Recording all legible inscriptions in a systematic fashion in special notebooks
3. Photography- Taking digital photos of each individual stone as well as more comprehensive shots of the cemetery as a whole
4. Data collection (completing the packet-see attached)

**Assessment:**

- Each student will complete the questionnaire packet.
- Each student will write a follow up essay regarding what they learned through the cemetery project.
- The whole group will contribute to and create a cemetery map/ photographic database to preserve the history of the cemetery.

**Performance Standards:**

- formulate historical questions based on primary and secondary sources, including documents, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, artifacts, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams and written texts;
- distinguish between primary and secondary sources;
- interpret data in historical maps, photographs, art works and other artifacts;
- demonstrate an in-depth understanding of major events and trends in local history (e.g., the Pequot war, establishment of self-government, disestablishment of the Puritan church, industrialization, waves of in-and-out migration, suburbanization, racial tensions)
- initiate questions and hypotheses about historic events being studied;
- be active learners at cultural institutions such as museums and historical exhibitions;
- display empathy for people who have lived in the past