



LESSON PLAN

THE TEXAS OIL BOOM

Social Studies, Grades 4 and 7

OBJECTIVE

Oil production dramatically changed the culture and economy of Texas in the first half of the 20th century, during what was known as the Texas Oil Boom. The widespread production of oil throughout the state rapidly increased the wealth of individuals and corporations, globalized the Texas economy, and changed the primary industry of the state. The Texas Oil Boom had a broad socio-cultural impact, as well, resulting from both the rapid development of communities around oil fields and the movement of large numbers of people to labor in areas around oil production.

This lesson examines the history of the Texas Oil Boom, as well as the “boom and bust” cycle of oil towns, the early period of independent oil prospecting, and the eventual push for regulation. Using videos featured on Texas Archive of the Moving Image, including documentaries, newsreels, home movies, and more, students will analyze events in the history of the oil industry, and assess the impact of both individual and government action. Students will develop analytical and critical thinking and viewing skills, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their subject. The worksheet designed to accompany the video is intended to encourage critical thinking about the role oil plays in the Texas economy, the impact the discovery of oil has on communities, and the benefits and advantages of regulation and oversight.

The Extended Learning section of the lesson employs a project-based learning approach, which improves retention of new content and develops students’ personal connections to the past. Students will be asked to work cooperatively with their class, as well as in groups or independently on their own research and final project. Students may find the discussion and information in the video/s useful for their Extended Learning project. An annotated list of resources for additional research is also provided.

PROCESS

Prior Knowledge

Students should have prior knowledge of the following areas to successfully take part in this activity:

- A basic understanding of the Texas economy, industry, and production.
- Awareness that oil is a commodity that is important to the Texas economy.
- Skills to conduct basic research on their subject and present the information they have gathered on their topic.



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- Access to technology that allows them to view streaming video in a group setting or individually.

Hook

Begin by dividing the board or overhead into four columns – environment, economy, community, and individuals. Have students break into four groups and brainstorm what they think changed in these areas after oil was discovered in Texas. Collect their responses and compare the lists. List the most common examples given on the board/overhead.

Discuss with students each of the topics and have them try to make connections with how these topics may overlap or how a change in one area may affect another, such as how having a lot of people moving to an oil field to work may place a strain on a community if they don't have the infrastructure to support it.

Optional Hook - Visual Vocabulary: Oil

Introduce essential terms related to the study of the oil industry through our [Visual Vocabulary: Oil activity](#).

Lesson

approx. 1 hour

Tell students that they will start by watching the documentary film *Wildcatter* (1985). The film traces the history of the Texas Oil Boom by examining the actions of Texas wildcatters – the independent oilmen who were responsible for the discovery of many of the major oilfields in Texas. Explain that the film looks at the history of three major oil producing areas in Texas and the people involved in oil exploration and production. The film also includes scenes that depict oil exploration in more modern times.

Hand out the worksheet (see Worksheets) with questions over the film. This worksheet will highlight some of the terms and key concepts mentioned in the film, as well as require critical thinking where students weigh both the benefits and disadvantages of oil prospecting.

Show students the video “Wildcatter: A Story of Texas Oil (1985),” (see Videos). Have students complete the questions on the worksheet as they watch the video (they may complete the critical thinking portion of the worksheet after class discussion).

After students complete the worksheet, ask students what they thought the biggest risks were with oil production? Do they agree or disagree that regulation was necessary? How do they think proration changed the way that oil was produced?



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Students should complete the critical thinking portion of the worksheet, asking them to reflect over the material presented.

Extended Learning

Depending on the size of your classroom and your available resources, break students into groups or let students work independently. Have students select a site of a major oil discovery in Texas history (e.g. Spindletop, Panhandle, Corsicana, Big Lake, East Texas Field, Wichita, etc.). A full listing of all early Texas oil fields can be found on the Texas Almanac site here:

<https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/other/oil10.pdf>.

Have students use their books, class notes, library books, TAMI video footage, and the discussion from the lesson to research the history of their oil discovery. Students should then create a presentation or slideshow illustrating the history of oil in the region. The presentation should address the impact of the discovery of oil on the culture and local economy of the surrounding area, the environmental impact, how the boom-and-bust cycle played out in the community, and what impact proration may have had.

Worksheets

Worksheet - The Texas Oil Boom - Grades 4 and 7

<https://texasarchive.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Worksheet%20-%20The%20Texas%20Oil%20Boom%20-%20Grades%204%20and%207.pdf>

Videos



Wildcatter: A Story of Texas Oil (1985)

Produced by October Productions and the Dallas Historical Society, this 1985 documentary chronicles the history of the Texas oil boom. Using archival material and interviews, the film focuses on the development of three major oil fields: Spindletop, Big Lake, and East Texas.

https://texasarchive.org/2015_01012

RESOURCES

History of Oil Discoveries in Texas,

<https://texasalmanac.com/index.php?q=topics/business/history-oil-discoveries-texas>

Oil and Texas: A Cultural History,

<https://texasalmanac.com/topics/business/oil-and-texas-cultural-history>

Bullock Museum: Roughnecks,

<https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/roughneck>

Texas State Library: "Hazardous Business: The Oil Wars,"

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/railroad/oil/page2.html>



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Spindletop Oilfield, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dos03>

Oil and Gas Industry, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/doogz>

Oil Exploration, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/doo15>

Books

Spindletop Gusher: The Story of the Texas Oil Boom

by Carmen Bredeson

Spindletop Gusher tells the story of Spindletop from discovery to today. It includes information on the history and development of Spindletop and the surrounding region, as well as information on alternative energy sources.

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

Paperback: 64 pages

Publisher: Bright Sky Press (January 18, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1933979666

ISBN-13: 978-1933979663

Texon: Legacy of an Oil Town (Images of America)

by Jane Spraggins Wilson and James A. Wilson

Texon: Legacy of an Oil Town is an annotated photo book about the company oil town, Texon, which was located close to the Big Lake oil reserve.

Series: Images of America

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Arcadia Publishing (May 23, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0738579904

ISBN-13: 978-0738579900

TEKS

Grade 4

4C - Identify the impact of railroads on life in Texas, including changes to the cities and the oil industry.

5A - Identifies the impact of various issues and events on life in Texas such as urbanization and the increased use of oil in 20th century Texas.



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5B – Explains the development and impact of the oil and gas industry upon industrialization and urbanization in Texas, including important places and people such as Spindletop and Pattillo Higgins

8A – Identify and explain clusters and patterns of settlement in Texas during the oil boom

8B – Describe and explain the location and distribution of various towns and cities in Texas, past and present

9A – Describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as energy production.

9B - Identify reasons why people have modified their environment in Texas, past and present.

9C - Compare the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in Texas, both governmental and private, such as economic development and the impact on habitats and wildlife as well as air and water quality.

12B - Explain how geographic factors such as climate, transportation, and natural resources have influenced the location of economic activities in Texas.

12C – Analyze the effects of exploration and limited resources on the economic development and growth of Texas

12E – Explain how developments in transportation and communication have influenced economic activities in Texas.

13B - Identify oil products of Texas that are purchased to meet needs in the United States and around the world.

20B - Describe how scientific discoveries and innovations in energy and technology have benefited individuals, businesses, and society in Texas.

21B - 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.

21C - Organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, and visuals.

21D - Identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event.

22D - Create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, and outlines.

Grade 7

7A – Explain the political, economic, and social impact of the oil industry on the industrialization of Texas.



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7B – Define and trace the impact of "boom-and-bust" cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries such as oil and gas production.

10A – Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and analyze the positive and negative consequences of the modifications.

10B – Explain ways in which geographic factors such as limited water and energy resources have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas.

12A – Explain economic factors that led to the urbanization of Texas.

12B – Trace the development of major industries that contributed to the urbanization of Texas such as transportation, oil and gas, and manufacturing.

12C – Explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas.

13A – Analyze the impact of national and international markets and events on the production of goods and services in Texas such as agriculture, oil and gas, and computer technology.

13B – Analyze the impact of economic concepts within the free enterprise system such as supply and demand, profit, government regulation, and world competition on the economy of Texas.

13C – Analyze the impact of significant industries in Texas such as oil and gas, aerospace, medical, and computer technologies on local, national, and international markets.

20A – Compare types and uses of technology, past and present.

21A – Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.

21B – 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.

21C – Organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

22B – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.

22C – Transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate.

22D – Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.