Overview

This lesson focuses on Kansas as the "Great American Desert." Students will analyze historic primary source documents that both create and dispel the myth of Kansas as "The Great American Desert." Students will then work in groups to produce a multimedia project to attract 19th century immigrants to "The Great American Desert." This lesson is written for two to three class periods.

Standards

Current standards can be found on kshs.org.

Objectives

Content:
- The student will develop a 21st century interpretation of Kansas' geography.

Skills:
- The student will analyze primary sources and decide how they influenced public opinion about Kansas as the "Great American Desert."
- The student will develop 21st century skills by creating a multi-media presentation.

Essential Questions

- How effective was advertising in dispelling the myth of Kansas as the "Great American Desert"?

Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas!* cards:
- **Major Long and the "Great American Desert"**
- **Promoting Kansas Card 1**
- **Promoting Kansas Card 2**
- **Promoting Kansas Card 3**
- **Promoting Kansas Card 4**

Day 1

1. Explain that this lesson is on dispelling the myth that Kansas is a desert as identified by Stephen Long in 1820. The students will begin by brainstorming the definition of a desert.
   a. Have students team up in pairs and write down everything they know about a desert.
   b. Teams then share their answers to form a class list of what they already know about a desert.
   c. Have students copy the class list in the "Traits of a Desert" column on the **Kansas Geography** graphic organizer.

2. Have students examine a map of the physiographic regions of Kansas that includes descriptions of each region. This can be located on pages 20 and 21 of *The Kansas Journey* textbook. More information can be found by searching precipitation and vegetation maps on the Internet. Have students identify the physiographic region in which they live and then use this name to label the right column of the chart on the Kansas Geography graphic organizer.
   a. Working again in pairs, have students write down all of the vegetation and living things found in their community.
   b. Teams will share their responses to form a class list of living things found in their community (physiographic region).
   c. Have students copy this list in the right column of the **Kansas Geography** graphic organizer.

Day 2:

1. Reorganize students into groups of three to four students.

2. Provide each group with all **Promoting Kansas** Cards. Instruct students that they will be "reading" eight primary source documents looking for information to support the two views of Kansas: as a desert or as fertile farmland.

3. Distribute a copy of **Propaganda and the Railroads** graphic organizer to every student.

4. Review the different types of propaganda that are listed at the bottom of this graphic organizer. All of these types were used by the railroads in their attempt to dispel the myth of Kansas as a desert. Students must find at least one example of testimonials, glittering generalities, bandwagon effect, appeal to reason or emotion, and citation of statistics when they "read" the primary source documents and complete the graphic organizer. Students can work in groups but when finished each student will need his/her own completed graphic organizer.

Day 3

1. Using the **Kansas Geography** and **Propaganda and the Railroads** graphic organizers students will now begin to develop their final project.
   a. First students must individually write a summary to this question. "Railroad marketers worked hard to dispel the myth of Kansas as a desert. Using their techniques how would you market Kansas to 19th century immigrant groups?" This summary must be completed prior to engaging in the next group activity.

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b. The student groups (of three to four students) will then demonstrate what they have learned about geography and propaganda techniques by creating a marketing document to convince immigrants to come to Kansas and farm after the Civil War.

c. Each group can decide the format they want to use from the following suggestions. Instructor approval is required. If time permits, students can present their final project to the class.

- Newspaper article
- Photo story by Microsoft
- Poster
- Magazine article with photographs
- Rap song written and performed
- Fliers
- Newsletters
- Photographs
- Powerpoint
- YouTube video with flip camera
- Web blog
- Podcast
- Brochures

Assessment

1. Evaluate the student's ability to write a summary to the question on marketing Kansas to immigrants.

2. Evaluate the students' projects using collaboration and project rubrics.

For the Teacher

The 11 physiographic regions of Kansas are: High Plains, Red Hills, Glaciated Region, Ozark Plateau, Arkansas River Lowlands, Chautauqua Hills, Smoky Hills, Flint Hills Uplands, Wellington-McPherson Lowlands, Cherokee Lowlands, Osage Cuesta.

For more railroad materials that promote Kansas as a farmland, visit kansasmemory.org

Definition:

Desert – An arid region due to the small amount of rainfall. Desert regions support only sparse or widely spaced vegetation or no vegetation at all. A region that receives less than 10 inches of annual precipitation is the most used definition of a desert. Low precipitation is not the only criterion.

Name _____

Kansas Geography

Traits of a desert	Traits of my physiographic region: _____

Name _____

Propaganda and the Railroads

Document 1: Source information	Brief description: Propaganda technique:
Document 2: Source information	Brief description: Propaganda technique:
Document 3: Source information	Brief description: Propaganda technique:
Document 4: Source information	Brief description: Propaganda technique:
Document 5: Source information	Brief description: Propaganda technique:
Bandwagon: An appeal to the subject to follow the crowd, to join in because others are doing so as well **Testimonial:** Quotations or endorsements which attempt to connect a famous or respectable person with a product or item **Glittering generalities:** Emotionally appealing words that are not supported by facts or information **Citing statistics:** Using numbers to persuade public opinion **Appeal to reason or emotion:** Adjusting facts to appeal to certain groups of people through the use of emotion	

Multimedia Rubric

Criteria	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	Point Total
Content	• Information is inaccurate • A clear lack of research is evident • Inappropriate content	• Some information is inaccurate or unrelated to the topic • Incomplete content	• Accurate information is provided • Vocabulary is clear and and appropriate	• Accurate detailed information is provided • Vocabulary enhances the presentation	
Propaganda Techniques	• Uses no propaganda techniques in presentation	• Uses one propaganda techniques in presentation	• Uses two propaganda techniques in presentation	• Uses three or more propaganda techniques in presentation	
Presentation Skills	• Clear lack of preparation is evident • Only one student participates	• Lack of preparation or incomplete • Some of the students participate	• Ideas are communicated adequately with • Most of the students participate	• Main ideas are communicated in an interesting • All of the students participate	
Visuals	• Visuals are nonexistent or unrelated to the topic • Uses inappropriate material	• Visuals are used occasionally throughout the presentation • Does not make effective use of visuals	• Visuals supports the information being presented • Effective connections are made with visuals	• Visuals explain and reinforce the presentation • Clear, detailed connections are made with visuals and contents	
Mechanics	• Presentation has five or more grammatical or spelling errors	• Presentation has three or more grammatical or spelling errors	• Presentation has one or two grammatical or spelling errors	• Presentation has no grammatical spelling errors	

Student Score

5 x
_____
%

Name _____

Collaboration Rubric

Criteria	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	Point Total
Content	• Assignment is incomplete or missing key elements • Information is unrelated to topic	• Some elements of the assignment are missing • Some information is inaccurate	• All elements are complete • Accurate information has been provided	• All elements are completed in an interesting manner • All information is accurate and supports the work product	
Contribution	• Student did not turn in assignment • Student collected little or no information	• Some assignments are incomplete • Student collected unrelated information	• Most assignments are complete • Collected basic information related to the topic	• All assignments complete • Collected information that enhances the final project	
Cooperation	• Student relies on others to complete the work • Student did not communicate with other group members • Student argues with teammates	• Student completed some of their assigned work • Student communicated very little with group members • Student sometimes argues	• Student completed most assigned work • Student communicated adequately with group members • Student rarely argues with others	• Student completed all assignments • Student initiated contact among group members • Student respects other group members	
Responsibility	• Student does not turn in assignments	• Student turns in some assignments late	• Most assignments are turned in on time	• All assignments are handed in on time	
Organization	• Student refused to work with others • Work is incomplete or out of order	• Student sometimes worked with other group members • Work is out of order or messy	• Student worked with other group members without any problems • Work is complete and organized properly	• Student worked well with all other group members • Work is well organized	

Student Score | 5 x _____ |
| %

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