

Social Science 3400: Spoon River Anthology Lesson Plan Assignment

Introduction

Published in 1915, 2010 marks the 95th anniversary of *Spoon River Anthology*. Written by Edward Lee Masters, this book is a collection of free verse poems that tell the story of a fictional small town named Spoon River. Each of the 212 poems is an epitaph delivered by one of the inhabitants. By piecing together the information in each short poem, the reader discovers a collective account of life in Spoon River. In this lesson, you will integrate the concept of *Spoon River Anthology* with fieldwork and primary document research in order to teach students about their own local history. Once complete, your lesson plan will be reviewed for publication on the Past Tracker website (www.eiu.edu/~localite/PastTracker) in conjunction with the “Spoon River Revisited” project.

General Instructions

The general concept for this lesson has already been developed. Your assignment is to flesh out the details and figure out how to make these components work together. Your lesson plans must contain:

- A fundamental focus on an event or time period that is significant to the local history of your community
- Out of class fieldwork in a local cemetery
- Out of class research in primary document repositories (libraries, genealogical societies, historical societies)
- Group work. It is suggested that you divide your students into at least 2 groups: one for field work and one for primary document research. Additional groups might be desirable.
- A requirement to post student work to one of the pages the “Spoon River Revisited” Wiki page (address). Students can post biographical sketches to the Poetry Page, primary documents found in the course of research, or reports on local history research findings.
- Adherence to NCSS Lesson Design requirements. See the handouts detailing this design for more information.

For example, one way to structure this lesson plan is to divide students into two large groups. Within those groups, half of the students complete cemetery fieldwork while the other half research local history in primary document repositories. Students share their findings with their original group. Each student then completes a fictional, biographical sketch of a person in the cemetery based on the facts found during research.

Considerations

As you are building your lesson plans, you may want to consider:

- What time period would be most appropriate to the history of your community

- Creating worksheets to document gravestone and primary document research or post to the “Spoon River Revisited” Wiki
- The timeline of progression required to complete the project (for example, the number of class periods needed)
- How to divide up students to facilitate learning and sharing of information
- Incorporating Illinois State Learning Standards into your lesson

Curriculum Standards

The concept developed for this lesson plan is guided by the following Illinois State Learning Standards for Social Science. When creating your lesson plan, look to the following state standards for guidance. Depending on the time period or event that you intend to explore in your lesson plan, additional standards may apply. Be sure to note on your lesson plan under “Illinois State Learning Standards” if you incorporate additional standards.

16.A.3c Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.

16.A.4b Compare competing historical interpretations of an event.

16.A.5b Explain the tentative nature of historical interpretation.

16.A.5a Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry (pose questions, collect and analyze data, make and support inferences with evidence, report findings).