UNIT OF STUDY: Charles Greener, painter

TITLE OF LESSON PLAN: People in Sod Houses...

GRADE LEVEL: 3-5

SOUTH DAKOTA CONTENT STANDARDS:

US History:
• 3.US.1.1 Students are able to identify the obstacles and successes of early settlers and Native Americans in creating communities.
• 4.US.1.1 Students are able to explain factors affecting the growth and expansion of South Dakota.

Geography:
• 5.G.2.1 Students are able to describe how climate and geography influenced the way of life of Native American tribes and the movement and activities of settlers.

Reading:
• 4.R.4.1 Students can identify and distinguish the characteristics of multicultural texts, historical texts, and time period texts.
• 4.R.5.2 Students can research a topic by gathering information from at least two sources.
• 5.R.5.3 Students can choose references to meet the needs of an assigned task.

Listening, Viewing, & Speaking:
• 4.LVS.1.1 Students can identify and explain the purpose of the presentation through listening and viewing.
• 5.LVS.1.3 Students can select and organize relevant information gathered through listening and viewing.

Writing:
• 3.W.1.3 Students can write a paragraph using supporting details.
• 4.W.1.3 Students can compose a paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES:
• Class discussion
• Observation of student research skills
• Evaluation of student writing using 6+1 Writing Traits as a guide

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
• Students will learn about South Dakota artist Charles Greener.
• Students will use VTS observations to describe images in Charles Greener’s painting “Homestead”.
• Students will describe how a sod house is built.
• Students will explain the significance of settlers living in sod houses.
• Students will evaluate what had to be considered when building a sod house.

TIME REQUIRED:
• One class period of 45 - 60 minutes

MATERIALS/TECHNOLOGY NEEDED:
• Image of the Charles Greener painting “Homestead”
• Access to the Internet and library resources for research about sod houses (good link below)
• Computer access to complete a simulation on building a sod house (see link below)
• Writing paper
• Pen/pencil

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
Sod houses dotted the landscape of the plains of South Dakota. It was practical to build because dirt and sod were readily available - unlike timber. Surprisingly, many personal accounts state that living in a sod house was quite pleasant. Artist Charles Greener’s painting “Homestead” appears to show a sod building next to a newer home built with lumber.

LESSON DESCRIPTION:
• Show students the image of Charles Greener’s painting “Homestead”. Ask students to look closely at the photo and answer the following questions:
  • What do you see?
  • Where is this image from? How do you know?
  • Who lives there? How do you know?
  • What do you hear? What do you smell?
  • *Add any additional questions based on class discussion.
• Explain to students that there were many types of houses as the settlers moved into the Plains. One of the most popular type of houses for early settlers were sod houses. Ask students what they think these homes were, what they looked like, what living inside them was like, etc.
• Invite students to research sod houses in the library or online (the Smithsonian link below for Life in a Sod House is very good and should match the reading level of many of the students in this age level).
• After students have read about Life in a Sod House, have students go to the Smithsonian online activity - “Building a Sod House.” This activity asks students a series of questions about where to build a sod house, where would they live in while the house is being built, etc. It provides students with many issues that they would not have thought about regarding building a sod house.
• After the activity, have students write a one paragraph evaluation of their experience with the online simulation (i.e. were they able to complete their sod house on the first try). They could also write about something unique that they learned about building a sod house.

ENRICHMENT:
• Students could read the book (individually or as a class) Dandelions by Eva Bunting. The book is about a family that built a sod house and what the daughter does to make the house beautiful.
• Students could also build a model sod house implementing specific features (based on class objectives).
BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCES:

- Greener Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  - Charles Greener painting: “Homestead”
  <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/f/sodhouse.html>.
  <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/sodhouse/>.