Overview

In 1938 the U.S. Congress proposed the building of Tuttle Creek Reservoir near Manhattan. Building the dam and reservoir would disrupt the lives of citizens in 10 Kansas communities, completely destroying five of these, and inundating more than 50,000 acres of prime farm land. Without the protection of the dam, the potential damage during a flood to cities and towns downstream could amount to millions of acres of flooded crop land, transportation facilities paralyzed, and businesses destroyed. In this “fence sitting” activity, students representing Blue Valley residents or the U. S. Corps of Engineers and merchants downstream will use primary sources including videos to persuade classmates who are the politicians to take a stand. The lesson is written for three class periods.

Standards

Current standards can be found on kshs.org.

Objectives

Content:
- The student will analyze the human and economic costs involved in building Tuttle Creek Dam.
- The student will analyze the human and economic costs associated with flooding on the Kansas River.
- The student will analyze efforts of groups for and against Tuttle Creek Dam.

Skills:
- The student will make and defend judgments based on evidence about the Tuttle Creek Dam project.
Essential Questions

- Should government have the right to take away a person’s personal property?
- Who should make the flood control policy for a state?

Activities

This activity uses the following Read Kansas! cards:
- Flood Control for the Missouri River Basin
- The Flood of 1951
- Heritage of the Blue River Valley
- Blue River Valley Residents Defend their Land
- Blue Valley Belles Campaign Against the Dam
- Protecting the Larger Cities
- Merchants Speak in Favor of the Dam
- Blue River Valley Residents Take the Fight to the Voters
- Letter Writing Campaign
- Kansas Legislators Take Action to Stop Tuttle Creek Dam
- Results of Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir

This activity also uses the following videos:
- The Tuttle Creek Story: kansasmemory.org/item/208840
- The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee’s efforts after the 1935 flood: kansasmemory.org/item/204928
- Kaw Valley Flood: kansasmemory.org/item/223692

Day 1 and 2

1. Introduce the lesson by having the class read the Flood Control for the Missouri River Basin Read Kansas! card, which offers historical background information about the Blue River Valley and flooding problems. Discuss the maps of the Missouri River and Kansas River system and the history of flooding on the Kansas River.

2. View and discuss The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee’s efforts after the 1935 flood: kansasmemory.org/item/204928.

3. Provide students with copies of The Flood of 1951 Read Kansas! card. After reading, review the 1951 flood map to emphasize the point that this was a summer of unusual precipitation across the entire state.

4. Tell students that they are going to be involved in a role-playing activity. It is based on real events from the 1940s and 1950s. During this time residents of northeast Kansas were involved in a great controversy with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The issue was the building of Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir. The residents did not want to give up their personal property. The Corps of Engineers; city officials from Topeka, Lawrence, and Kansas City; and many merchants and factory owners who owned businesses near the Kansas River; wanted to prevent flooding. The politicians made up the third group.
in the controversy. They had the power to authorize the building of the dam and appropriate the money or choose not to fund it. It is important that students disregard the fact that the dam was actually built. They are to place themselves in the time and position of having the power to either stop the dam or let the building proceed.

5. Divide the class into thirds with each group representing one of the interested parties. Explain that the politicians are to be unbiased entering this activity.

6. Explain that the pro-dam and anti-dam groups will study primary and secondary sources (print and video) offering insight into their situations. Both groups will use graphic organizers to record evidence that supports their belief. Each member of the group will be responsible for using these arguments during the role playing phase of this exercise. The goal of the Blue Valley residents will be to persuade the politicians to vote against funding the dam project. The pro-dam group will try to convince the politicians to vote in favor of it.

7. The politicians will be provided with background information regarding the varied political actions that have occurred. They will work together to develop questions to ask both sides that will help them make their decision. Since the politicians are “on the fence,” they will listen to both sides, ask pertinent questions, and reach a decision based on the discussions.

The anti-dam group studies:
  a. The Tuttle Creek Story video
  b. Heritage of the Blue River Valley Read Kansas! card
  c. Blue River Valley Residents Defend their Land Read Kansas! card
  d. Blue Valley Belles Campaign Against the Dam Read Kansas! card

The pro-dam group studies:
  a. Kaw Valley Flood videos
  b. Protecting the Larger Cities Read Kansas! card
  c. Merchants Speak in Favor of the Dam Read Kansas! card

The politicians study:
  a. Blue River Valley Residents Take the Fight to the Voters Read Kansas! card
  b. Letter Writing Campaign Read Kansas! card
  c. Kansas Legislators Take Action to Stop Tuttle Creek Dam Read Kansas! card

Day 3
1. After the research phase is complete, create three-person groups that contain one pro-dam supporter, one anti-dam person, and one politician. The students in small groups will simultaneously follow the procedure described below, which will ensure that each person has an opportunity to present his or her viewpoints. The goal of the activity is to persuade the politician to vote for a particular side. Once the rounds are finished the politicians will vote (either by oral vote or secret ballot). The side that receives the most votes wins the competition.

Round 1:
  • The anti-dam person talks first for one minute followed by the pro-dam person who also gets one minute.
  • The anti-dam person then gets 30 seconds of rebuttal time and the pro-dam person receives the same amount of time.
  • During these periods only one person is talking with no questions or interruptions.
Round 2:
- The politician receives two to three minutes to ask clarifying questions of both the pro-dam and anti-dam representatives.

Round 3:
- Both the pro-dam and anti-dam persons are provided with a short time for final arguments.
- The round finishes with the politician asking any final questions of both representatives.

2. The activity ends with the politicians voting one by one for either the pro-dam or anti-dam cause.
3. Lesson can be adjusted by increasing the prep time or changing the amount of time during the debate.
4. As a conclusion have the students read and discuss Results of Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir Read Kansas! card.
5. As an assessment piece, students can defend their own beliefs about building the dam and reservoir in a persuasive paragraph.

Assessment

- Write a persuasive paragraph based on one of these statements and include at least three supporting details.
  a. Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir should be built.
  b. Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir should not be built.

For the Teacher

1. The videos are available on kansasmemory.org or through YouTube’s Kansas Memory channel.youtube.com/user/KansasMemory.
   b. The Tuttle Creek Story video kansasmemory.org/item/208840 consists of three clips totaling 27 minutes.
   c. Kaw Valley Flood video: kansasmemory.org/item/223692 consists of three silent clips.
2. The Kansas River is also referred to as the Kaw River.
3. If you are using the textbook, The Kansas Journey, this lesson can be used with pages 258-259. Other primary sources are available at kansasmemory.org.
Definitions:

**Appropriation** – an act of a legislature authorizing money to be paid from the treasury for a specified use.

**Easements** – the right of one property owner to use another landowner’s property for a limited purpose such as passage through the land.

**Inundating** – flooding

**Memorial (ize)** – a request usually from a state legislature requesting Congress to take action or refrain from taking action.

**STOP** – as used in a telegram signals the end of a sentence.

**Vituperation** – malice; desire to inflict injury, harm, or suffering on another, either because of a hostile impulse or out of deep-seated meanness.

**Watershed** – an area that drains precipitation to a common waterway such as a stream, river, or lake. The watershed associations lessened the damage caused by watersheds by trapping the water where it fell. To do this they built small flood retardant dams, used contour cultivation, and water terraces.
Anti-Dam Group

It is for the good of the citizens that Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir should not be built.

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**Name** 

**Pro-Dam Group**

It is for the good of the citizens that Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir should be built.

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