EXPLORING THE LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN

Research the Facts

- Conduct research about the goods that were produced in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin during the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries. Choose two important products. Find figures that show how much was produced or exported. Draw a graph to show the amounts of both products for at least two different time periods. Write a paragraph to tell what your graph shows, explaining any changes over time.

- Visit museums and libraries to collect information about the modes of transport throughout the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Make a pictorial presentation of these methods of transportation, showing the changes over time. Pay attention to the influence of the Lake on transportation.

- Find information about major hurricanes that have hit the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Make a list of the most destructive storms. Compare the damage done by two storms at different times (e.g., compare the damage of the hurricane of 1915 with that of Betsy in 1965). Document the number of lives lost and the amount of property damage.

Illustrate the History of the Lake with Maps and Pictures

- On the map of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, indicate important historical markers with dates and labels.

- Find photographs from books or draw your own pictures to depict significant scenes from each of these centuries: 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st. Using the pictures you collect, make a time line of the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.

Write and Read About Lake Pontchartrain Basin History

- Choose a character from the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Read about the daily life of the character. Write a short essay entitled “A Day in the Life of (your character).” Try to bring in daily activities such as those in your life, highlighting how they would be different because of the earlier time in history.

- Write a diary entry about a trip to the Lake with your family in 1850. Choose Milneburg or New Lake End as your destination. You can travel by barge on the New Basin Canal or on Smoky Mary, the train to Milneburg.

- Imagine that it is 1835 and you are a guest at Bernard de Marigny’s fashionable new resort in Mandeville. Write a diary entry about your journey to the resort, your activities there, and the people you meet.

Lake Reflections

- Reflect on the past, present and future of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Write your vision for Lake Pontchartrain in 2010. What will it take on your part to achieve your vision?

- Make a scrapbook or collage to show how Lake Pontchartrain and/or its rivers influence your life.
Find Out What Others Know and Feel about the Basin’s History

- The whole class can participate in making a short questionnaire to find out how much people know about the cultural history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Each student should contribute two or three questions; then the class votes for the best ones. Ask for permission to have people complete the questionnaire at any of the following places: the annual Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation “Back to the Beach” Celebration, your local public library, your school, your local mall. Analyze the results and publish them in the school student newspaper.

Mime the History of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin

- Make up actions that represent each key event in the cultural history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Mime the events in their historical sequential order.
- Play “Pontchartrain Charades.” Players take turns miming scenes from the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.

Music Activities

- Write a ballad about an important character in the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Write a romantic song about Lake Pontchartrain or its rivers. Play and sing the folk-song The Lakes of Ponchartrain (next page).
- Write a script for an interview (both questions and answers) about a famous jazz musician from New Orleans.
The Lakes of Ponchetrain

chords: (GDCGEmCG ~ EmDG-C-//1st)

It was one fine March morning I bid New Orleans adieu
And took the road to Jackson Town my fortune to renew
I cursed all foreign money, no credit could I gain
Which filled my heart with longing for the Lakes of Ponchetrain

I stepped on board a RR car beneath the morning sun
And I rode the rails til evening & I laid me down again
All strangers they’re no friends to me til a dark girl towards me came
And I fell in love with a Creole girl on The Lakes of Ponchetrain

I said, “Me pretty Creole girl, my money here’s no good
If it weren’t for the alligators I’d sleep out in the wood.”
“You’re welcome here kind stranger, our house is very plain
But we never turn a stranger out on The Lakes of Ponchetrain

She took me into her mama’s house & treated me right well
The hair upon her shoulders in jet black ringlets fell
To try to paint her beauty I’m sure t’would be in vain
So handsome was my Creole girl on The Lakes of Ponchetrain

I asked her would she marry me, she said that ne’er would be
For she had got a lover & he was far at sea
She said that she would wait for him & true she would remain
Til he returned to his Creole girl on The Lakes of Ponchetrain

So fair you well my bonnie old girl, I ne’er may see you no more
I’ll ne’er forget your kindness in the cottage by the shore
And at every social gathering, a golden glass I’ll drain
And I’ll drink all health to the Creole girl on The Lakes of Ponchetrain

Source: In Flanders et al. (1934) The New Green Mountain Songster.