

**Lesson Title:** Ft. St. Louis: A Do-It-Yourself History

**Subjects:** Texas History and Geography, English Language Arts, Technology Education

**Grade level:** 7 (Can be adapted for grades 4-11)

Teacher and students should have an understanding of some basic features of Microsoft Word (Save, Copy, Paste, Print, and the top menu bars) and be able to navigate the Internet.

**Lesson Duration:** Three 45 minute class periods

**Objective:** Students will work in cooperative groups to gather primary and secondary source materials from the Texas Beyond History website. They will then incorporate these materials into an illustrated history book about Fort St. Louis, the first French settlement in Texas.

**Materials:**

- Computer access to the Texas Beyond History website [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/index.html](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/index.html)
- Computer printers
- Texas History textbook
- Fort St. Louis Research Notes
- Fort St. Louis Research Notes Answer Key
- Fort St. Louis Artifact Analysis Sheet
- Fort St. Louis Grading Criteria Sheet

**Activity – Day One**

- Step 1: Explain to students that one of the Six Flags Over Texas is the Fleur-de-Lis, or French Flag, and that while the early French settlement of Fort St. Louis was

not ultimately successful, it played a very important role in European exploration and settlement in Texas.

- Step 2: Advise students that they will be researching the history of Fort St. Louis on the Internet and using the research information they gather online to write books about Fort St. Louis. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Distribute the Fort. St. Louis Grading Criteria Sheet and go over it with students. Point out that in order to include everything called for, students will have to divide up the various tasks required among themselves.
- Step 3: In the computer lab or on classroom computers, guide students to the Texas Beyond History (TBH) Fort St. Louis website. Advise them that they may use any information on this site in compiling their books, as long as they give credit to the appropriate authors. They may cut and paste text, maps, pictures and diagrams and may print these to help illustrate their books.
- Step 4: Distribute Fort St. Louis Research Notes and instruct students that the information gathered for these notes will be used in their book's Introduction. Have students complete their research notes, using their textbooks and the TBH website to gather their information.

## **Day 2**

- Step 1: Discuss the use of sources in writing history. Describe primary and secondary sources (see vocabulary). Some of the best information we have about Fort St. Louis can be found in the journal (a primary source) of the French soldier and explorer, Henri Joutel. Traveling to Texas from his native France,

Joutel accompanied La Salle on every step of their expedition to find the mouth of the Mississippi River in the New World. After La Salle's murder by his own men, Joutel returned to France in 1688, taking his journal with him. Explain to students that any primary source document found on the TBH Fort St. Louis website is actually a source within a source, within a source. As Henri Joutel's journal contains accounts of events he actually witnessed, it is considered a **primary source document**. The book that contains the translation of Henri Joutel's journal, *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henri Joutel, 1684-1687* (edited by historian William C. Foster), is a **secondary source document**, because it discusses information originally produced somewhere else after the historical event took place. And that book is used inside another **secondary source document** – the TBH website. (See Credits and Sources section of the Fort St. Louis exhibit).

- Point out that to earn a full 100 points on their books, students will have to use more than one primary source. For help in citing bibliographic entries, see the following: [http://www.mla.org/style\\_faq1](http://www.mla.org/style_faq1)
- Step 2: Explain that a great many artifacts (see vocabulary) from Ft. St. Louis can tell us about life at the settlement. Distribute the Fort St. Louis Artifact Analysis Sheets, one per group. Explain that the information on the sheet will describe an artifact students find on the TBH Fort St. Louis site. The completed sheet will be included in their book.

- Step 3: Have students continue their research. Remind them to periodically refer to their Grading Criteria Sheet to keep track of the points they're accumulating.

### **Day 3**

- Step 1: Have students complete their research and assemble their books, checking their Grading Criteria Sheets to make sure they have all necessary information. Student books can be as simple as a stapled collection of all their papers, or a more elaborate handmade book. For directions on making handmade books, see:  
<http://www.dickblick.com/lessonplans/handmadebooks/>
- **Lesson Closure:** Ask students the following question: "After conducting your research, how do you think Fort St. Louis affected future European exploration and settlement in Texas?" Have them explain their answers. Then point out that even though the settlement and most of its inhabitants didn't survive, its existence spurred Spanish interest in settling Texas. Then ask how Texas might have been different today if the French had been much more successful in Texas. Possible answers include: more French spoken in Texas, more Texas French place names, such as cities, rivers, counties, etc.

### **Vocabulary:**

- Artifact – anything created or altered by humans
- Primary sources – documents or physical objects which were written or created during the time under study. Some types of primary sources include diaries, letters, official records, poetry, art and artifacts (pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings, etc.)

- Secondary sources – These are usually documents that discuss information originally produced somewhere else after the historical event has taken place. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes, or graphics of primary sources in them. Textbooks, histories, journals, magazine articles, and websites are the most common secondary sources.

**Modification:** Give students more time to complete their books.

**Student Product:** Illustrated book about Fort St. Louis

**Assessment or evaluation:** Fort St. Louis Grading Criteria Sheet

**Curriculum Standards:**

This activity meets the following standards from the **Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):**

7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

- 2B identify important individuals, events, and issues related to European exploration and colonization of Texas
- 21A use primary and secondary sources to acquire information about Texas
- 22C transfer information from one medium to another

English, Language Arts

- 23C record bibliographic information for all notes and sources
- 25A draws conclusions and summarizes or paraphrases the findings in a systematic way

Computer Applications (middle school)

- 2C use computer technology to record, locate, analyze, present, and exchange information

This learning activity also fits within the following **National Voluntary Curriculum Standards:**

- Social Studies:
- Time, Continuity & Change
- People, Places & Environment
- Global Connections

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