

EVERYBODY COUNTS: LEARNING ABOUT THE CENSUS

A UNIT in Two Lessons

Unit Overview:

Since 1790 there have been 23 censuses taken in the United States. This year will mark the 24th US Census. The Census is important both to understand the needs of each individual community throughout the country but also to track changes in our nation, cities and neighborhoods over time.

Unit Summary:

The Country is working to complete the 24th Census of the United States this year. This lesson will help students to learn what the Census is and why it is important to our daily lives. They will have the opportunity to see part of the 1860 Census from the city of Millerton, the original Seat of Fresno County, and learn what information it holds and how the questions on the Census have changed over time. Students will be able to explain what the Census is and how it is used and also connect it to the current election cycle.

Time Allotment:

Taught in two 20-30 minute lessons.

Grade Level: 6-8

Standards

History-Social Science Content Standards

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

1. Students frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research.
2. Students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories.
3. Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

Historical Interpretation

1. Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
2. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.
3. Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.
4. Students recognize the role of chance, oversight, and error in history.
5. Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

Define census is and describe what it is used for.

Describe how the information collected in the Census has changed over time.

Examine and analyze a census report.

Materials

Videos

2020 Census Promo - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXJz7ZfzAuM>

What's the Census and Why is it so Important - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn4K3XoywLY>

Documents

Images of the 1860 Census completed for Millerton in Fresno County

1890 Census Form from the US Department of Commerce

2010 Census Form from the US Department of Commerce

Images

Historic photos of Millerton

Early Map of Fresno County

Handouts

What's the census and Why is it so important - Questions and Answer (Answer Key Provided for Teachers)

Introduction Activity: Foundational Knowledge

Set-up: Tell the students that this year we are all participating in the decennial Census. Define Decennial as once every 10 years. Have students watch on their own the: 2020 Census promo to gain a brief understanding of the Census.

Learning Activity #1: Understanding the Census

Provide students with the *What's the Census and Why is it so Important* - questions (handout). Tell them to write down the answers to the questions as they watch the next video.

Together as a class watch the youtube video *What's the Census and Why is it so Important* Pause the video to discuss main points as needed and review answers to the questions with the class.

Dive Deeper - Talk with the class about the fact that the Census helps to determine how many elected officials each state send to the House of Representatives. Based on our population in the last Census - California has 53 representatives, the most of any state. This is an election year in which we will vote not only for the President of the United States but also for some of our Representatives.

Ask the class to stand up if they were born after 2010 (this should be everyone). All students who are standing will be counted by the Census for the first time this year. Tell the class that there will not be another one until 2030. That means that they will all be able to vote before there is another Census to determine how many representatives California can send to Congress. So this Census is very important to each of them.

Learning Activity #2: Using the Census for Research

Recap for students the discussion from Lesson 1 on what a Census is and why we have it.

Share with students that the Census records not only help us to provide for our present and future by determining where Federal funding is most needed and helping to apportion out elected officials in the house of representatives - the Census is also a historical record that shows us about our past.

Show map of the county and locate the town of Millerton, Fresno County's first county seat. Share with the students the historic photos of Millerton's courthouse and the townspeople (included with the lesson materials).

Distribute the pages of 1860 census (4) from Millerton, Fresno County for each student (included with the lesson materials)

Share with the class the following information about the 1860 Census:

Few, if any, records reveal as many details about individuals and families as do the U.S. federal censuses. The population schedules are successive "snapshots" of Americans that depict where and how they were living at particular periods in the past.

In 1860 census takers made a record of people who lived in Fresno County. Census takers went to households and listed everyone who lived there. Census takers collected lots of information. Each entry represented one household. The census taker recorded the name, age, sex, color, occupation of men over 15 years old, the value of real estate (land) owned, and place of birth. The head of the household was listed first. His wife was usually listed second, followed by children and others living in the household.

Enumerators of the 1860 census were instructed to record the names of every person in the household. Added to this, enumerators were presented with printed instructions, which account for the greater degree of accuracy compared with earlier censuses. Enumerators were asked to include the following categories in the census: name; age as of the census day; sex; color; birthplace; occupation of persons over age fifteen; value of real estate; whether married within the previous year; whether deaf, dumb, blind, insane, a pauper, or a convict; whether able to read or speak English; and whether the person attended school within the previous year. No relationships were shown between members of a household. The categories allowed Congress to determine persons residing in the United States for collection of taxes and the appropriation of seats in the House of Representatives.

The official enumeration day of the 1860 census was 1 June 1860. All questions asked were supposed to refer to that date. By 1860, there were a total of thirty-three states in the Union

Share with the class the pages from the 1860 census from the town of Millerton. Looking at this census from 160 years ago what information can be learned?

Record the information on a chart. Ask the class:

- What were most people doing?
- What types of businesses were in Millerton?
- What cultural communities populated the town?
- From what countries and what states in the United States did people come?
- How many men lived in Millerton? How many women?

Discuss observations and results.

Assessment

Use the following questions to guide a recap discussion, as a quiz, or a guideline for a quick writing assignment.

Learning Activity #1: Understanding the Census

Quick write: Have students write a 1 page summary on what they have learned about the U.S. Census and identify why it is important for the country to count its population.

Learning Activity #2: Local examination of the census

Quick write: Have students study the 1860 Census of Millerton and write a 1 page paper about the town in 1860 from the information that is available on the document.

Extension Activity

Learning Activity #3: Compare and Contrast the 1890 Census with the 2010 Census

Provide students with the 1890 Census form and the 2010 Census form.

Share with students that these two documents were developed over 100 years apart and are both for the same purpose - to count every person living in the country.

Ask each student to identify 3 similarities and 5 differences between the two forms.

Similarities

- Asks how many people are living in the home
- Asks for full name, Age and Sex of each person
- Asks for persons' race

Differences

- 1890 schedule has 20 more questions than the 2010 census
- The 2010 census asks for a phone number, the 1890 census does not. (Most people did not have a telephone in 1890)
- Asks for place of birth and naturalization information (citizenship question)

- Asks for occupation
- Asks if people can read and write

Discuss as a class why they think the questions have changed overtime. Share with students that there are other departments of government that did not exist in 1890 that can collect the information that we no longer ask on the census. Example: The Department of Education can track literacy rates and help people who need to learn to read and write today, there was no Department of Education in 1890.

Distance Learning Options

- Hold discussions via video conferencing software like Zoom or Teams. Alternatively, require students to contribute to an online discussion board 3-5 times per discussion session.
- Hold live stream or video presentations in which each student is required to fill 1 minute of time.
- Have students report out online their answers to the questions from the video.