

Canyonlands National Park Lesson Plan
For 7th Grade Utah Studies
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Background

In southeastern Utah the Green and Colorado Rivers and their tributaries have carved deep canyons through red rock cliffs creating miles of maze-like slot canyons and numerous mesas and arches. In the early 1960s, several lawmakers, including senators Wallace Bennett and Frank Moss from Utah, proposed bills in Congress to officially establish the “Canyonlands,” comparable in size to the Grand Canyon, as a national park.

For years prior to the proposal to officially establish Canyonlands as a national park, nearby residents and many tourists had explored the area by jeep, on foot, by boat, and by horseback. They discovered beautiful natural landscapes, Native American petroglyphs, and many other awe-inspiring locations. Because of the region’s natural beauty and the potential benefits of tourism in the area, many individuals desired to preserve the canyons as a national park on the scale of Yellowstone, Yosemite, or the Grand Canyon. The Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, encouraged lawmakers to take action.

Despite the many benefits a national park could bring to the area, many individuals opposed the establishment of a national park. Some opponents included local farmers and miners who depended on the area to support their families economically. Many people believed that the costs of restricting such a large area of land as a national park would hurt the local economies, a cost that would outweigh any benefit that the park would bring. Due to this opposition, lawmakers added the possibility of “multiple use” to the proposed bill.

Most national parks operate on the idea of single-use. This means that the natural area set aside for the park is intended to be used for the sole purpose of preserving the landscape, allowing visitors to enjoy magnificent natural areas of the country. No commercial activities such as mining or farming take place within the boundaries of single-use national parks. In contrast, a multiple-use park would allow some commercial activities within the boundaries of the park. For example, under multiple-use, certain companies could obtain for a certain period of time permission to mine or graze animals in parts of the park.

For more than three years, lawmakers argued over the multiple uses of the Canyonlands. Some strongly supported the park without multiple use, while others argued vehemently for the interests of businesses. Groups and individuals argued over the size of the park and which natural features should be included within its boundaries. People even argued over whether the area should be a national park at all. Eventually, the various stake-holders compromised and Congress passed the bill establishing Canyonlands National Park in 1964. Their compromise established a single-use park of about 238,000 acres, with multiple uses allowed on land bordering the park. Over the next few years, they expanded the boundaries to include other areas including some Native American sites.

Today Canyonlands National Park continues to serve as a major tourist attraction in southeastern Utah. Despite the controversy surrounding its creation, the compromises made to establish the park have allowed for the protection of a magnificent and unique natural landscape.

Objectives

1. Students will use evidence from sources representing multiple perspectives to determine how effective the compromises used to create Canyonlands National Park were at meeting the needs of all interested groups.

Utah State Standards for Utah Studies

UT Standard 4.2:

Students will make an evidence-based argument regarding the appropriate roles of local, state, and federal governments in resolving a current and/or historical issue. (civics)

UT Standard 4.5:

Students will describe the historic and present management of natural resources and make recommendations for natural resource management in the future. (geography)

UT Standard 4.6:

Students will evaluate the impact of tourism on Utah's economy and geography, such as the development of tourism industries, state and national parks, and events including the 2002 Olympics. (economics)

Time

These materials are expected to take approximately 75 minutes of instructional time. Teachers could reduce the time required to teach this lesson by reducing the number of documents they require students to analyze. If teachers have extra time, they may have students evaluate more of the documents.

Materials

1. *Student Graphic Organizer*: This organizer is designed to help students use evidence to support a claim by giving them a place to keep a record of the desires of each party involved in the creation of Canyonlands National Park as they analyze documents. Two alternative graphic organizers are available—one with the stake-holders named and one that requires students to identify who the different stake-holders were.
2. *Document Archive*: A collection of documents related to diverse viewpoints of what provisions should be included in the bill for the creation of Canyonlands National Park. Found at this link or using this QR code.
<https://sites.google.com/view/canyonlandsnationalpark-uth/archive>



3. *Background Information*: Basic information that introduces the students to the background needed to work effectively with the documents and understand the context of the creation of Canyonlands National Park. Teachers might use this to create a PowerPoint presentation or students could read this to prepare for the activity.

Preparation

- Review the materials to build background knowledge about the controversy surrounding the creation of Canyonlands National Park and the compromises each side made to allow for the creation of the Park.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation on the material or prepare reading materials for students.
- Make a classroom set of the *Document Packet*.
- Make a copy of the *Student Graphic Organizer* for each student.
- Consider appropriate groups of students that would allow those with greater skills in reading and historical thinking to help those with weaker skills.

Procedures

1. Provide students with background knowledge on the controversy surrounding the creation of Canyonlands National Park, including concepts such as multiple-use, mining, grazing, conservation, and tourism. This can be done through a brief lecture using PowerPoint Slides. While you may provide a few examples of the controversy, it is important that you do not give away too much so as to allow the students to discover their own answers about the desires each side had and the compromises each side made in the creation of Canyonlands National Park. Alternatively, students might read the background information provided at the start of this lesson plan.
2. Explain to students the instructions for completing the *Student Graphic Organizer* and for using the accompanying document archive. You may consider modeling how to complete the graphic organizer as you analyze one of the sources on tourism from the *Document Archive*. You may consider modeling your thought process as you analyze the source, showing students how to complete the graphic organizer as you do.
3. You might model completing the graphic organizer by projecting something like this for students to see:

Who was the group that was speaking?	What did they say were their interests?	What did they get?	What did they give up?
Tourists	Protect the natural area as much as possible. Large National Park. No multiple-use	No multiple use National Park protecting natural landscapes	They got a smaller park than they wanted.

- Depending on the students' reaction to this first source, you can model the analysis of a second document from the document archive just as you did for the first document. You might also have students work with a group to analyze the second document then regroup as a class and discuss what they came up with. You might display the next line of the graphic organizer and have students share their ideas with each other, allowing them to model for their peers.
- Once you are confident the students understand the process you can give them time to work in teams on other documents from the archive. You may consider having students look at at least eight documents, making sure to include various documents from each perspective. As the students work, you may circulate to give support as needed. Give students time to answer the question at the bottom of the graphic organizer.
- After the students have analyzed the desired number of documents, bring the entire class back together for a debriefing session. Ask the students questions and allow them to discuss and respectfully critique others' responses. You might do a general survey of the class to see who does or does not believe that the compromises used to create Canyonlands fairly represented each party involved. You could then call on students to cite the evidence from the documents that supports their stance.

Assessment

- Use students' answers to the questions on their graphic organizer to assess students' ability to use evidence from documents to defend an argument. The final writing task on the graphic organizer can be used to assess their argumentative writing abilities as well as their comprehension of the concepts related to the creation of Canyonlands.
- During the debriefing session, assess the students' ability to present and defend a clear argument civilly with other class members who may have different opinions.

Adaptations/Extensions

- For students who have trouble writing, instead of having them fill out the graphic organizer, you might have them highlight the documents with different colors for those parts that give insights into what each party involved in the creation of Canyonlands desired and what they have to compromise to create the park.

2. Strategic grouping of students can help struggling students and can stretch gifted students.