

Louisiana State Exhibit Museum

## **Louisiana Dioramas**

### **Field Trip Information and Activities**

K-4 students are invited to visit the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum and view our 22 dioramas that depict Louisiana's agriculture, technology, and natural resources during the 1930-1950 periods.

#### **Overview**

A diorama is a small model of a real-life scene that has lifelike details and a realistic background. A diorama, a mini-world in a box, appears as a freeze frame of a historic event or anything else the artist wishes to create.

Students will examine the LSEM dioramas to learn about technology, industry, natural resources, and agriculture in Louisiana during the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Grades**        K-4

**Subject**       Louisiana History

**Time**    One day to explain about the dioramas the students will view depicting Louisiana's rich agricultural history, one day for a field trip to LSEM, two to four days to prepare in class dioramas

#### **Benchmarks**

- Identifying and describing the human characteristics of places, including population, distributions and culture (G-1B-E2)
- Describing how the physical and human characteristics of places change over time (G-1B-E3)
- Describing and comparing the types of settlement and patterns of land use in local communities, the United States, and world regions (G-1C-E2)
- Identifying and comparing the cultural characteristics of different regions and people (G-1C-E4)
- Identifying and explaining ways in which people depend upon and modify the physical environment (G-1D-E1)
  - Explaining the relationships between producers and consumers (E-1A-E5)
- Identifying the major goods and services produced in the local community and state (E-1B-E5)
- Recognizing that people in different times and places view the world differently (H-1A-E2)
- Describing how natural resources, human resources, and capital (human-made) resources have been used and are combined in the production of goods and services (E-1A-E6)

- Describing how specialization affects productivity and contributes to the need for interdependence among producers and consumers (E-1A-E7)

### **Pre-Visit Activity**

Introduce students to the concept of dioramas—a small model of a real-life scene that has lifelike details and a realistic background; a re-creation of a natural setting which shows a specific moment in time. The American Museum of Natural History on the internet may be visited at <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/dioramas> to demonstrate how museums illustrate through the use of dioramas.

Explain that the class will visit the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum to view 22 dioramas about Louisiana industry agriculture, and natural resources. Explain that these murals reveal information about Louisiana during the 1930's – 1950's.

Tell students that they will examine dioramas to learn how they reveal information about specific topics.

Explain to students that after they have toured LSEM and returned to the classroom they will be creating their own dioramas. Arrange class into groups of 3-4 students and each group will be in charge of creating a diorama based on the ones viewed at the museum.

### **Museum Field Trip Activity**

1. Make copies of the **LSEM Diorama Viewing Journal**, one per student.
2. Explain the journal organization and project instructions.

### **Post-Visit Activity and Project**

1. Discuss student impressions of the LSEM dioramas. Ask students to explain the different ways the dioramas relayed information about Louisiana.
2. Distribute copies of the Diorama Design Instructions and Storyboard activity sheet and Diorama Rubric, explaining the process of creating a diorama.
3. Provide time for student research as well as diorama design and construction.
4. Create a diorama gallery or display.
5. Send pictures of the dioramas to us at the address listed below for a chance to have your class dioramas featured on our Internet site.

Education Curator  
Louisiana State Exhibit Museum  
3015 Greenwood Road Shreveport, LA 71109

**Louisiana State Exhibit Museum**  
**Diorama Viewing Journal**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

A diorama is a small three-dimensional model of a real-life scene that has lifelike details and a realistic background.

Use information you gain from the 22 LSEM dioramas to complete this viewing journal.

**PART 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE LSEM DIORAMAS**

1. Walk through the LSEM diorama display gallery to get an overview of the topics and subjects on display. List four major themes that the dioramas illustrate.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What features do the dioramas have in common?

3. Why do you think museum audiences like to view dioramas?

4. How do the dioramas display or suggest

Emotion or human feelings

Action or movement

Facts and historical or scientific information

**PART 2 SELECT ONE DIORAMA TO EXAMINE IN DETAIL**

5. I chose to examine the \_\_\_\_\_ diorama.

6. What story does this diorama tell?

7. a. List some of the objects that are most important in relating this story.

b. Is their placement in the diorama important to the story? Explain.

8. What facts can you learn from this diorama?

9. How does each of the following elements contribute to the diorama story?

Color

Shape

Size

Distance

**PART 3 SUMMARY STATEMENT**

Write one sentence that describes why you think the LSEM dioramas are historically and artistically important.

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# Diorama Design Instructions and Storyboard

1. **Decide on a story.** What moment, event, scene, and facts do you want to capture? Think about how you can relay information about your topic without using words. Try to find ways to leave the viewers wondering what will happen next. If you are making a bayou diorama, you could capture the moment just before a big fish is about to gobble up a little fish. This tells a story. Use the Diorama Storyboard handout to plan your scene.

## Story Ideas

2. **Decide on a scale.** This is important, because a diorama becomes believable to the extent that it looks "real." If you have a focus (a plastic figure or animal that is the main object in your diorama), use that scale. That is, make certain the other objects you use appear in the correct proportion to your focus item. If not, try a scale of 1 foot to 1 inch. That is the standard scale for miniature buildings and houses.

3. **Collect your materials.** Collect human and/or animal figures, trees, sugar cubes to build an igloo, or doll house furniture and miniature foods for an interior scene.

4. **Decide on a background.** You can paint or draw your own or use wallpaper or wrapping paper or anything else you can find. Remember that the background images should be consistent with the scale you have chosen.

## Background Ideas

5. **Choose a container.** Many diorama projects use cardboard boxes or shoe boxes, but you can use just about anything. Your container should be light but sturdy, especially if you will need to move the diorama around.

6. **Build your diorama** working from the back to the front. Start with the background by creating the horizon, sky/ceiling, and ground/floor. Make certain the paint and glue is dry before placing objects in the diorama. First, place large objects such as trees. Place the smallest objects close to the front. Use glue or putty to secure the objects.

## Things You Might Need:

- cardboard box, shoe box, or other container
- dollhouse dolls
- miniature animals and trees
- hobby paintbrushes
- miniature food, vegetation, and/or building elements
- modeling clay
- poster paint
- glue or putty
- acrylic paint or paper for backdrop

## DIORAMA RUBRIC

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Diorama Topic \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Quality of Construction</b>	The diorama shows considerable attention to construction. The items are neatly trimmed. All items are carefully and securely attached to the backing. There are no stray marks, smudges or glue stains. Nothing is hanging over the edges.	The diorama shows attention to construction. The items are neatly trimmed. All items are carefully and securely attached to the backing. A few barely noticeable stray marks, smudges or glue stains are present. Nothing is hanging over the edges.	The diorama shows some attention to construction. Most items are neatly trimmed. All items are securely attached to the backing. A few barely noticeable stray marks, smudges or glue stains are present. Nothing is hanging over the edges.	Careless construction. Items appear to be just "slapped on". Pieces may be loose or hanging over the edges. Smudges, stains, rips, uneven edges, and/or stray marks are evident.
<b>Creativity</b>	Several of the objects used in the diorama reflect an exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display	One or two of the objects used in the diorama reflect student creativity in their creation and/or display.	One or two objects were made or customized by the student, but the ideas were typical rather than creative (.e.g, apply the emboss filter to a drawing in Photoshop).	The student did not make or customize any of the items on the diorama.
<b>Design</b>	Objects are an appropriate size and interesting shape and are arranged well. Care has been taken to balance the diorama scene.	Objects are an appropriate size and interesting shape and are arranged well. The diorama, however does not appear balanced.	Objects are an appropriate size and shape, but the arrangement of items is not very attractive. It appears there was not a lot of planning of the item placement.	Objects are of an inappropriate size and/or shape. It appears little attention was given to designing the diorama.
<b>Time and Effort</b>	Class time was used wisely. Much time and effort went into the planning and design of the diorama. It is clear the student worked at home as well as at school.	Class time was used wisely. Student could have put in more time and effort at home.	Class time was not always used wisely, but student did do some additional work at home.	Class time was not used wisely and the student put in no additional effort.
<b>Attention to Theme</b>	The student gives a reasonable explanation of how every item in the diorama is related to the assigned ecosystem. For most items, the relationship is clear without explanation.	The student gives a reasonable explanation of how most items in the diorama are related to the assigned theme. For many of the items, the relationship is clear without explanation.	The student gives a fairly and reasonable explanation of how most items in the diorama are related to the assigned theme.	The student's explanations are weak and illustrate difficulty understanding how to relate items to the assigned theme.
<b>Totals</b>				

