

Louisiana Dioramas

Field Trip Information and Activities

Visit the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum and view our 22 dioramas that depict Louisiana's agriculture, technology, and natural resources during the 1930-1950 period.

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 wants to create.

Students examine the LSEM dioramas to learn about Louisiana technology, industry, natural resources, and agriculture during the early and mid-20th century. Working with their peers, each group of students selects one diorama topic to update. Students create a diorama that reflects their topic as it exists in the contemporary world.

Grades 3-4

Subjects Louisiana History and Geography

Time One day to explore the history of murals, one day for a field trip to LSEM, two to four days to prepare the diorama

Benchmarks

G-1B-M4: describing and explaining how personal interests, culture and technology affect people's perceptions and uses of places and regions.

H-1A-E1: Demonstrating an understanding of the concepts of time and chronology

H-1A-E2: Recognizing that people in different times and places view the world differently.

H-1A-E3: Identifying and using primary and secondary historical sources to learn about the past.

H-1B-E2: Relating the history of the local community and comparing it to other communities of long ago.

H-1C-E4: Recognizing how folklore and other cultural elements have contributed to our local, state and national heritage.

Pre-Visit Activity

1. 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. Show examples of student-produced dioramas, such as the pictures below, and visit the American Museum of Natural History on the Internet at <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/dioramas/> to demonstrate how museums use dioramas to illustrate the world in which we live.



2. 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 early and mid-20th century.
3. Tell students that they will examine how the dioramas reveal information about a specific topic. Working with their peers, your class can select one diorama topic to update by creating a diorama that reflects their topic as it exists in the contemporary world with teacher guidance

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, 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
3015 Greenwood Road
Shreveport, LA 71109

318.632.2020

www.sos.louisiana.gov/lsem

Museum hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m

**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?

PART 2 SELECT ONE DIORAMA TO EXAMINE IN DETAIL

5. I chose to examine the _____ diorama.

6. What story does this diorama tell?

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

8. What facts can you learn from this diorama?

PART 3 SUMMARY STATEMENT

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

Diorama Design Instructions and Storyboard

1. **Decide on a story.** What moment, event, scene, 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