

Summary (for instructor): Learners create a timeline of regional human-environmental interactions, beginning with earliest human settlement and continuing through today. Through an extension activity, students analyze how their region might be different today if different historical choices had been made. The activity is designed to be used with the World Resources Institute's "Southern Forests for the Future" publication, available at <http://www.seesouthernforests.org>. (Activity time: At least 120 min.)

Introduction (for students)

Humans have altered the environment throughout history in order to meet various needs. Before the development of agriculture, people hunted and gathered, impacting the availability of animals and plants. About 10,000 BCE (before the Common Era), people began clearing land to grow food as they developed agriculture and farming. As human populations grew, people cleared forests for cities, drained wetland areas, and made other changes to accommodate growth. At each stage, these changes had impacts on the environment and other species within it.

In this activity, you will create a timeline showing human alterations to the environment and some of the impacts. The format may be a poster, a series of Powerpoint slides, or other format suggested by your teacher.

Directions

1. Choose a topic or time period from the list on the following page. (Refer to Chapter 3, pages 23-36, in the *Southern Forests for the Future* publication, which includes information about human-environmental interactions in southern forests from pre-European settlement to the present.)
2. Use at least three sources (including the *Southern Forests* publication) to learn about human-environmental interactions in the southern U.S. Select at least 5 examples of events or changes that were significant. Examples might be the introduction of agriculture, the arrival of people from Europe, or the start of a particular business or industry. Criteria:
 - a. Select events that you believe are important.
 - b. Write the year and a description of the event.
 - c. For each event:
 - i. Describe how humans transformed or interacted with the environment. This can include interactions with animals, alterations to the land, or other types of transformations.
 - ii. Describe impacts on people, the surrounding environment, and/or the economy. Focus on impacts that occurred within that time period. Be specific about who or what was affected.
 - iii. Identify if or how the impacts have continued; that is, describe any changes or impacts that extended beyond the given time period and may be continuing today. Consider these questions:
 - Did the alternations permanently change the land or the ecosystem?
 - Have the changes harmed the ability of the ecosystem (past or current) to regenerate and provide life-sustaining services?
 - d. Finally, describe what people today can learn from the events of the past. In hindsight, what were positive and negative changes? Why? How might things be different today if different choices had been made? See the last page for an extension activity, "What if? Analyzing events in history."

Time periods and prompts

- 1. First human settlements:** Describe when the first people inhabited the southern U.S. What were they key indigenous groups? How did they interact with the environment in order to meet their needs? What role, if any, did agriculture play? What types of economic activity and trading took place? (Note: This period may extend thousands of years; break this into multiple time periods as needed.)
- 2. Arrival of European settlers:** What were the different waves of European settlement? What countries did they come from? Why? How did they alter the environment to survive? What was the economy based on? (Note: This period may extend several hundred years; break it into multiple time periods as needed.)
- 3. Establishment of industry (may overlap with #2):** What were the first major industries in your region, such as factories, mills, mines, or large-scale forestry? How was it powered? How did this affect the landscape and the development of cities?
- 4. Early 1900s:** What changes and growth occurred in the first part of the 20th century? How are these impacts still felt today?
- 5. 1940s-present**:** The post World War II era brought an increase in suburbanization and in many cases, urban decay as people who could afford it left the cities. This change was fueled by a federally-funded highways system, the availability of personal automobiles, and changes in land use rules that separated shops and businesses from homes. How did these patterns affect your region? What new roads, shopping areas or neighborhoods were built? How did these new areas affect older ones?
- 6. Your community within the past ten years (or since you were born):** What major changes have occurred in the past decade, or in the years since you were born? How are these changes related to the other time periods?

*** Additional lessons on land use policies and related topics are available through Creative Change's Curriculum and Resource Center. Learn more at www.creativechange.net/crc*

Extension: What if? Analyzing events in history

Introduction

You've explored historical events that have shaped your region. But what if some of these events had not happened, or turned out differently? How would the region look today?

In this activity, you will select an historical event and generate a hypothesis about how things would be different if the event had not occurred.

Directions

1. Choose an event or decision from the list you generated in the timeline activity.
2. Building on your timeline research, write paragraph about why this event was significant for your region. How did this event shape land use and community development?
3. Now, write a second paragraph about how the community might be different if the event had not occurred (your **hypothesis**), and explain your response.

Criteria for both paragraphs:

- Use evidence to defend your position. Use facts and citations to state why the event you selected was influential. Go back through the articles and lessons to find data and other supporting information. You can also conduct research on-line and in the library.
- Similarly, use facts and evidence to support your statement about what might have happened. Your hypothesis should create logical connections and conclusions.
- You can create a drawing, add a timeline, or develop other elements to help illustrate your point.

Note: *Subscribers to Creative Change's Curriculum and Resource Center (CRC) can see examples of how to use and sequence this lesson as part of a full unit in the "Ready-made Units" section of the CRC. (Access may vary depending on subscription type.)*

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