



# TALES FROM THE CRYPT: Learning about Geography and History from Your Local Cemetery

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**Grade Level** 6-12  
**Duration** 5 class periods

## National Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Element 2 Places and Regions

4: The Physical and Human Characteristics of Place

6: Places and Regions: How Culture and Experience Influence People's Perception of Places and Regions

#### Element 4 Human Systems

9: Human Systems: The Characteristics of Human Populations on Earth's Surface

10: Human Systems: The Characteristics, Distribution, and Complexity of Earth's Cultural Mosaics

#### Element 6 The Uses of Geography: 17:

How to Apply Geography to Interpret the Past

## AZ Standards

### ELA

#### WRITING

##### Text Types and Purposes

6.W.2, 7.W.2, 8.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

9-10.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make

## Arizona Social Science Standards

**The use of geographic representations and tools helps individuals understand their world.**

6.G1.1 Use and construct maps, graphs, and other representations to explain relationships between locations of places and regions.

7.G1.1 Use and construct maps and other geographic representations to explain the spatial patterns of cultural and environmental characteristics.

8.G1.1 Use geographic tools and representations to analyze historical and modern political and economic issues and events.

HS.G1.2 Use geospatial tools and related technologies to construct relevant geographic data to explain spatial patterns and relationships.

**Human-environment interactions are essential aspects of human life in all societies.**

8G2.2 Evaluate how political, social, and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental

important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style and an appropriate tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

11-12.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting, graphics, and multimedia when useful for comprehension.

b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and rhetorical techniques to manage the complexity of the topic.

characteristics of various places and regions.

HS.G2.3 Evaluate the impact of human settlement on the environment and culture of specific places and regions.

**Examining human population and movement helps individuals understand past, present, and future conditions on Earth's surface.**

6.G3.1 Analyze how cultural and environmental characteristics affect the distribution and movement of people, goods, and ideas.

7.G3.1 Explain how changes in transportation, communication, and technology influence the spatial connections among human settlements and affect the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices.

HS.G3.1 Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.

**Global interconnections and spatial patterns are a necessary part of geographic reasoning.**

7.G4.1 Analyze cultural and environmental characteristics among various places and regions of the world.

**HISTORY**

**The development of civilizations, societies, cultures, and innovations have influenced history and continue to impact the modern world.**

HS.H1.3 Evaluate the consequences that resulted

e. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.  
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

6.W.8, 7.W.8, 8.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

9-10.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

11-12.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation

from civilizational and cultural interactions.

HS.H1.4 Analyze the impact of cultural diffusion.

HS.H1.5 Explain how religions and belief systems have affected the origins of societies.

HS.H1.6 Analyze the relationship among different regional, social, ethnic, and racial groups and explain how these groups' experiences have related to national identities.

### **Patterns of social and political interactions have shaped people, places, and events throughout history and continue to shape the modern world.**

6.H4.1 Describe how different group identities such as racial, ethnic, class, gender, regional, and immigrant/migration status emerged and contributed to societal and regional development, characteristics, and interactions over time.

7.H4.1 Evaluate how the diversity of a society impacts its social and political norms.

7.H4.2 Evaluate the changing patterns of class, ethnic, racial, and gender structures and relations; consider immigration, migration, and social mobility.

## Overview

Cemeteries are unique resources for studying the peoples of an area. In this field experience, students will gather and evaluate information about cultural symbols, nationalities, lifespans, and gender issues in a specialized landscape, the cemetery.

## Purpose

In this lesson, students will learn how cemeteries convey information about the history and geography of their communities. They will learn about symbols and regions commonly found in cemeteries. They will then explore a local cemetery and then report their findings in charts, graphs, and other written communications.

## Tales from the Crypt

### Materials

- Map of the local cemetery to be visited
- Student worksheets (will apply to any cemetery)
  - Calculating Lifespans of Adults and Lifespans of Children
  - Epitaphs, Sizes and Shapes
  - Common Symbols and Private or Public Spaces
    - Demographics of the Cemetery, A Short History of Names, and Resource Sheet for Determining Nationalities
    - Tombstone Tour of the Mesa City Cemetery (needs to be adapted to your cemetery)
    - Gravesite Visit
- A Closer Look at People Found in the Mesa Cemetery (needs to be adapted to your cemetery)
- Clipboards
- Scoring Guide
- Resources on local geography and history
- Internet
- White construction paper/poster board
- Markers or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Calculators

### Objectives

The student will be able to:

- ✓ apply the geographic skill of observation to real spaces.
- ✓ research local geography and history
- ✓ recognize the different groups of people who have settled an area.
- ✓ recognize how men and women have been represented differently in a cemetery.
- ✓ work cooperatively to answer questions.
- ✓ explain from whom local place names are derived
- ✓ explain how epitaphs reflect culture.
- ✓ recognize regions of a cemetery.
- ✓ recognize the private and public spaces of a cemetery.
- ✓ learn how symbols and lifespans differ between men and women.

### Procedures

**Background Information:** Observation is a key tool used by geographers. Noted geographer, Kit Salter advocates OSAE (Observation, Speculation, Analysis, and Evaluation) as a simple technique for having students read the landscape as a primary

document. And according to geographer, Janice Monk, landscapes can be a reflection of cultural values. Gender issues can be seen in reading such landscapes.

A cemetery is a specialized landscape found in almost all communities, and yet, how many students pay attention to what is found in this private and public space? In a cemetery, a student can observe symbols of our culture, read epitaphs that convey information about the deceased, calculate patterns in lifespans, analyze nationalities represented in the locale, identify how men and women are treated differently in our culture, and recognize how local place names originated.

Most cemeteries discourage tombstone rubbings as they may harm the stones. If you want to include this activity, check with the cemetery first.

#### SEVERAL WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF THE

**LEARNING ACTIVITY:** Call the local cemetery and inform them of your plans. Visit the cemetery on your own. Ask for help in locating names of historically significant people. Try for an even number of men and women, a balanced number of ethnicities, and representatives from various time periods. Look for names that can be researched easily with school resources. Look for names that have resulted in local place names. Ask about the regions of a cemetery (veteran's plots, pauper graves, mausoleums, "babyland," fraternal organizations' plots, Woodsmen of the World tombstones, sacred grounds for various religions, and old and new areas. Obtain a brochure of the cemetery and a map. Ask if doing tombstone rubbings is permitted.

Request permission from principal to take field trip, order buses, and secure parent permission. You'll need at least five chaperones, one for each group.

Copy the worksheets. A smart thing to do is use different colors of paper for the different worksheets. This makes it much easier to sort and hand out clipboards.

#### INTRODUCING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY:

##### Day 1 (1-2 Periods)

1. Introduce the students to the activity by explaining how your locale was first settled.
2. Then explain the geographic concept of O,SAE.
  - ✓ Observation: What do you see?
  - ✓ Speculation: What is the pattern that you see?

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- ✓ Analyze: What else do you need to know in order to confirm the pattern?
- ✓ Evaluation: What value judgments do you attach to these findings?

3. Tell them that this field research experience will have them practice OSAE as well as learn about the geography and history of their community.
4. Share some anecdotes from your experiences in visiting cemeteries. Please do not concentrate on spooky stories or do this activity at Halloween. Share some slides or a powerpoint of cemeteries.
5. Have them become familiar with the regions of a cemetery. A good website to check out is Grave Addiction <http://www.graveaddiction.com/>
6. Assign names of persons that are found in the local cemetery to students (1 name per student). Make sure that plenty of local geography and history books are available for the students to use on Day 3 when they will research information about this deceased resident.
7. Remind students of respect for funerals and gravesites. Remind students to dress comfortably and to bring water and a pencil.
8. Check back with the cemetery to see if funerals are scheduled in an area where students may be visiting. Gather materials to be used and attach the worksheets to each clipboard.

### EXECUTING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

#### Day 2 (1-2 hours)

*Note: There are too many assignments for one group to do all activities unless this is a much longer field study. While it would be nice to have all students learn each facet of the learning experience, it is just not practical for most school settings.*

1. As students exit the bus, randomly hand out the clipboards with one assignment attached plus everyone receives a Gravesite Visit worksheet.
  2. Divide students into 5 groups based on the worksheet assignment they were handed. The groups will be:
    - Calculating Lifespans of Adults and Lifespans of Children
    - Epitaphs, Size and Shapes,
    - Common Symbols
    - Demographics of the Cemetery
    - Tombstone Tour
- Assign each group a chaperone.
3. Remind the students to stay together and work as a group. Emphasize that they have a group task as well as an individual task (to find the grave of the person they will be researching and then record the information they find at the gravesite).

Optional: If students have finished the assigned tasks and still have more time, have them complete a different worksheet.

4. Collect the papers and materials. They will be used during the next class period.

### DAYS AFTER THE TRIP

#### Day 3

1. Have the students who received the same worksheet assignments work together. Remind students that their group will make a report to the class on their findings on the following day.
2. In addition, remind students that they also will compose at least one paragraph on the deceased citizen that he/she is researching. Distribute the large-sized white construction paper and art supplies. Model what is expected: a tombstone with birth-death dates and an epitaph that reflects something that was learned about the person.
3. Share the Scoring Guide and 6 Traits Writing Rubric so students understand how they will be assessed.

### CONCLUDING THE LEARNING ACTIVITY:

#### Day 4 and 5

1. Have group report their findings to the class. Discuss the patterns that were seen as information is shared and have the students take notes of the findings.
2. When the five groups are finished, have students create a tombstone time line (based on birth dates) by standing holding their tombstone and explain what this person did to be famous.
3. Assign a reaction paper: How did you feel about cemeteries before we went? How do you feel about cemeteries now?

## Assessment

### ELA

The paragraph can be graded for organization and ideas and content. Does the paragraph show evidence of good research? Is the information factually correct (as much as possible considering the span of years after the death of the person). Mastery will be considered a "4" on the six traits rubric.

The epitaph on the tombstone can be graded for voice and ideas and content. Does the epitaph correctly portray the person? Is the epitaph appropriate in voice for a tombstone? Mastery will be considered a "4" on the six traits rubric.



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The reaction paper can be graded for organization and voice. Mastery will be considered a "4" on the six traits rubric.

### Geography

Points can be given for: completion of the cemetery worksheets (10 pts), oral summary of the group findings (10 pts), research and creation of a tombstone (20 pts), and working well with the group (10 pts). Mastery will be considered 40 points or higher.

### Extensions

Students can use internet to access historical phone books, city directories, and city maps to search for additional place names or company names that may be based on the deceased citizen's name.

If a field research activity cannot be done, use newspaper obituaries to complete some of the activities.

Great math links can be made by having the groups analyze their data and create charts or graphs illustrating their observations. For example the student studying symbols or nationalities in the cemetery could make a tally chart of the symbols/nationalities they found and then do a pie graph based on percentages. The group looking at lifespans would come up with an average for men and women while they could also create a box and whisker chart of the same information.

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