

Louisiana State Exhibit Museum

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 5-12

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

- Identify natural resources in Louisiana and describe their uses and importance (G-1D-E4)
- Describe the importance of specific natural resources to human survival and human endeavors (G-1D-E4)
- Explain ways in which goals, cultures, interests, inventions, and technological advances have affected perceptions and uses of places or regions in the United States (G-1B-M4)
- Locate major landforms and geographic features, places, and bodies of water/waterways on a map of Louisiana (G-1A-M2)
- Describe ways in which location and physical features have influenced historical events in Louisiana and the development of the state (G-1B-M2)
- Identify and describe factors that cause a Louisiana region to change (G-1B-M3)
- Explain ways in which goals, cultures, interests, inventions, and technological advances have affected perceptions and uses of places or regions in Louisiana (G-1B-M4)
- Analyze the benefits and challenges of the Louisiana physical environments on its inhabitants (G-1D-M2)
- Identify major goods and services produced in Louisiana (E-1B-E5)
- Identify people and their influence in the early development of Louisiana (H-1C-E1)
- Describe the importance of events and ideas significant to Louisiana's development (H-1C-E1)
- Describe beliefs, customs, and traditions of family life in the past and present (H-1B-E1)

- Identify and explain cultural elements that have contributed to our national heritage (H-1C-E4)
- Describe features of the earliest communities (e.g., shelter, food, clothing) (H-1C-M1)
- Describe hunter-gatherer societies, including the development of tools and the use of fire (H-1C-M1)
- Explain how geographical features influenced development of early civilizations (e.g., domestication, cultivation, specialization) (H-1C-M2)
- Use economic concepts (e.g., scarcity, opportunity cost) to explain historic and contemporary events and developments in Louisiana (E-1A-M9)
- Describe and analyze the impact of Louisiana's geographic features on historic events, settlement patterns, economic development, etc. (H-1D-M4)

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, each group of students will select one diorama topic to update by creating a diorama that reflects their topic as it exists in the contemporary world.
4. Arrange class into groups of 3-4 students each. Each group will research and update one of the LSEM diorama topics.

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

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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**

Grades 5-12

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
 - a. Emotion or human feelings

 - b. Action or movement

 - c. 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. List some of the objects that are most important in relating this story.
 - a.
 - 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?
 - a. Color
 - b. Shape
 - c. Size
 - d. Distance

PART 3 SUMMARY STATEMENT

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

Storyboard

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.

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

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.

DIORAMA RUBRIC

Name _____ Diorama Topic _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Quality of Construction	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.
Creativity	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.
Design	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.
Time and Effort	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.
Attention to Theme	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.
Totals				

Score _____ Letter Grade _____